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comment

THE MARKETING whizzkids at the Premier League are always keen for the Premiership to be portrayed as the best league in the world, the most exciting, most glamorous competition on planet football. Over the next few weeks that message will be reinforced again and again. Yet as we prepare to kick off the new season, the sales patter doesn't quite ring true.

This summer Premier League clubs have again been in a league of their own when it comes to money available to spend on transfers. Yet as they departed on shirt-shifting tours of America and the Far East, their failure to sign a single world-class player between them was glaringly obvious.

Sure, English football can claim home-grown talents like Steven Gerrard and Wayne Rooney, while the careers of Thierry Henry and Cristiano Ronaldo have flourished in the Premiership. But how come the likes of Ronaldinho, Samuel Eto'o, Adriano, Andrii Shevchenko, Julio Baptista and David Trezeguet all rejected the advances of Premier League clubs?

So much for the pulling power of the Premiership. Of the new arrivals in England, only a handful – Emre Belozoglu (Inter to Newcastle), Park Ji-sung (PSV to Man United), Alexander Hleb (Stuttgart to Arsenal) – have any experience of playing in the Champions League.

Of course, most of the moving and shaking in the transfer market has come from Chelsea, whose wealth is beginning to distort the game beyond all recognition. It has been heartening to see so many big names turn Chelsea down, mindful, no doubt, that their star status, not to mention their World Cup prospects, could be undermined by the fierce competition at Chelsea.

Full marks, though, to Lyon for holding out so long against Chelsea's attempts to sign Michael Essien. Santos also deserve support for resisting the demands of Real Madrid for their prize asset, Robinho, nurtured from an early age by the Brazilian club. Quite why Robinho, potentially one of the stars of next summer's World Cup in Germany, would want to jeopardise his chances of selection by moving to a new country and a new footballing culture so close to the big kick-off remains a mystery.

Had Madrid succeeded with an early bid for Robinho, then the player would have been whisked away to join that grotesque circus act, the pre-season tour of the USA and Far East, which is said to have earned Madrid around £25m this summer. That sum could also be earned by winning the Champions League, yet the task has now been made harder as Madrid start the season with a squad of exhausted, demoralised players.

There may be method in Madrid's madness, but there appears to be more logic in the season preparations undertaken closer to home, in Scandinavia and central Europe, by the likes of Arsenal, Barcelona and Liverpool. Come next May, we shall see. Enjoy the season!

Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)

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contents

WS WORLD SOCCER AUGUST 2005 VOL 45 NO 12

HEADLINERS
6 Ruben Omar Romano

DISPATCHES
From our correspondents
14 Brazil
16 United States

NEW SEASON IN EUROPE
18 Spain – Inside Story: Barcelona
24 Italy
26 England
30 France
34 Germany

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
Interviews and profiles
22 Xavi
44 Lukas Podolski
45 Cristiano Lucarelli

World Youth Cup, p51

Lukas Podolski, p44

DIGEST
News and reports from around the world
51 World Youth Cup
54 Europe
62 Libertadores Cup
64 South America
67 Africa
68 Asia
69 Oceania
70 Home Front

SIX OF THE BEST
40 New arrivals in England

TALENT SCOUT
Tomorrow's stars – today
73 Cicinho
74 Arnold Mvuemba
75 Joao Moutinho

REGULARS
8 Brian Glanville
12 Jim Holden
46 Paul Gardner
47 Financial Football
48 Keir Radnedge
76 Classified ads
83 World Service
98 The Knowledge

Cicinho, p73

CRUZ AZUL COACH KIDNAPPED
MEXICO: Ruben Omar Romano was abducted after leaving a team training session in Mexico City. **Page 6**

SAO PAULO WIN WITH SPIRIT
BRAZIL: Sao Paulo beat Atletico Paranaense in the first Libertadores Cup Final to be contested by clubs from the same country. **Pages 10 & 62**

TAKING A STAND
BRAZIL: Santos have won respect for resisting Real Madrid's attempts to sign international forward Robinho. **Page 14**

STORY OF THE BLUES

ENGLAND: Chelsea are in a league of their own as the new Premiership season kicks off. **Page 26**

MESSI AFFAIR

HOLLAND: Lionel Messi was the star of the World Youth Cup, which his Argentina side won by beating Nigeria in the Final. But the tournament was badly scheduled. **Page 51**

LOOKS FAMILIAR

GERMANY: As usual, Bayern Munich start as favourites in the Bundesliga. And Giovanni Trapattoni's back. **Page 34**

HUNGRY FOR MORE?

FRANCE: Defending champions Lyon have the best squad, but do they still have the appetite for another title? **Page 30**

HIDDINK TAKES THE HELM

AUSTRALIA: Guus Hiddink has agreed to take charge of the national team for the remainder of their World Cup qualifying campaign, and will stay in the post as long as the Socceroos reach the finals in Germany. **Page 69**

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

SPAIN: Champions Barcelona have been rocked by a boardroom crisis following the resignation of the man credited with bringing Ronaldinho to the club. **Page 18**

POWER, CORRUPTION AND LIES

ITALY: Behind the headlines, grabbed by the big-money transfers of Vieira and Gilardino, *calcio* has been in financial meltdown. **Page 24**

TERIM'S TURN AGAIN

TURKEY: Fatih Terim, who was last national coach nine years ago, has been rehired to oversee Turkey's last three, make-or-break World Cup qualifiers. **Page 58**

● 28/06/05

Sweet strike...Argentina captain Pablo Zabaleta is ecstatic after scoring the late winner against Brazil in the World Youth Cup semi-finals

● 29/06/05

Ticker-tape reception...Brazil's senior squad celebrate their Confederations Cup Final victory over Argentina, which also brought revenge for the Under-20s' defeat the previous day

HEADLINERS

Crime watch...investigators examine the scene following the abduction of Romano from his car

RUBEN OMAR ROMANO

Mexican football is stunned by the kidnapping of Cruz Azul's manager

CRUZ AZUL MANAGER Ruben Omar Romano was kidnapped by a group of heavily-armed men shortly after leaving a training session, the latest development in a frightening trend in Latin American football.

Witnesses said the abductors blocked the road, pulled the 47-year-old Argentinian out of his car and fired a warning shot which hit the car but did not apparently cause any injury.

There was no immediate ransom demand and police said that a note demanding $470,000 [£270,000], found at a church, was a sick joke.

Romano took over at Cruz Azul last year with the team in disarray and led them to the semi-finals of this year's closing championship.

He is one of a number of former Argentinian players who have made Mexico their home. Romano played for America, Atlante, Necaxa and Cruz Azul, began coaching with Atletico Celaya in 1998 and made his way to Cruz Azul via Tecos UAG, Morelia and Pachuca.

Mexico has one of the world's highest kidnapping rates, although Romano is only the second football-related victim. The other was the father of former Mexico goalkeeper Jorge Campos, who was held for a week before being released in 1999.

But footballers' relatives have become regular targets for kidnappers in Argentina and Brazil. Two members of the current Argentina team have had family members abducted. One of Juan Roman Riquelme's brothers, 17-year-old Christian, was snatched in 2002 and released after a reported £95,000 was paid. Defender Gabriel Milito's father was a victim in the same year and released after payment of a reported £18,000 ransom.

Leonardo Astrada, now the coach of River Plate, also had his father kidnapped in 2003 when he was a player with the team.

In Brazil, kidnappers have appeared to prefer players' mothers. The highest profile case involved the mother of Robinho, who spent 40 days in captivity last year.

Early this year, there was a spate of kidnappings involving the mothers of Luis Fabiano (FC Porto, now Sevilla), Rogerio (Sporting Lisbon) and Grafite (Sao Paulo). All were released unharmed.

This prompted players at the country's richest club, Corinthians, to appeal to the media to stop speculating on how much they were earning.

> **'In Brazil, kidnappers have appeared to prefer players' mothers'**

"We'd like to request that our salaries are no longer published," they said in a statement. "Given the increasing number of kidnappings involving the relatives of players, we believe that this type of information could make us more likely targets."

Brian Homewood

Happier times...Romano (right)

● 30/06/05

Flying in...but Guadalajara's commitment cannot stop Atletico Paranaense reaching the Libertadores Cup Final

● 02/07/05

Merry dance...Argentina's Under-20s party after beating Nigeria in the Youth Cup Final

● 06/07/05

Just kidding...Steven Gerrard says he's staying at Liverpool after all

RONALDO

The Brazilian striker said he will quit the national team after next year's World Cup. "It will be my fourth world championship and the time will be right to move aside for younger players," said Ronaldo, 28. He also revealed he hoped to see out his club career with Real Madrid. "I've four more years on my contract and then I'll finish my career."

PHILIPPE TROUSSIER

The French coach, who recently parted company with Marseille, angered Nigerian federation officials after he was interviewed for the post of national coach, only to reject their offer, apparently on medical grounds. "He should have had the courage to tell us during his interview that he didn't want the post. Instead, he let us down at the last moment," said federation president Ibrahim Galadima.

ANDRII SHEVCHENKO

The Ukrainian striker was involved in a heated training-ground argument with Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti in which he was heard to shout: "If you want me, keep me. If you don't, let me go." Though both parties moved quickly to dismiss the incident, Italian conspiracy theorists suggested the row was staged to pave the way for a move to Chelsea, who denied offering a world-record £60million for Sheva.

Numbers game

4...

the number of games played in different time zones in the space of a week by Real Madrid on their pre-season "global tour".

£130.3million...

the sum received by Bayern Munich from UEFA for competing in the Champions League since 1992, more than any other club.

5...

the number of bids received by UEFA to host Euro 2012: from Greece, Italy, Turkey, Croatia/Hungary and Poland/Ukraine.

24,224...

the official attendance at Manchester United's friendly game against Beijing Hyundai at the 70,000-capacity Workers' stadium.

16...

the number of coaching changes after 13 rounds of this year's Brazilian national championship.

£88,607.59...

the price per inch Liverpool have paid for 6ft 7in striker Peter Crouch, signed for £7m from Southampton.

£7.8million...

the amount spent on agents' fees by Football League clubs in 2004-05.

● 10/07/05

All square...Panama draw 2-2 with Trinidad & Tobago during the group stage at the Gold Cup

● 14/07/05

On the march...Junior battles with Andre Rocha of Atletico Paranaense as Sao Paulo win 4-0 in the Libertadores Cup Final second leg

WS WORLD SOCCER Brian Glanville

...on Arsenal's future post-Vieira...why Southampton should let Woodward concentrate on rugby...the pros and cons of Brazil and Argentina...and why Abramovich's assets may finally become public knowledge

Past his best?...Vieira did not have a great campaign last season

ARSENAL FACE LIFE without Patrick Vieira, but Gary Lineker, no less, has said the Gunners will not miss him, emphasising that last season was scarcely one of his best. Arsenal, in selling the Frenchman to Juventus, have presumably decided that they have had the best out of him, though at only 29 there is always the possibility that he will recapture his best, potent form once he breathes the air of Italy.

Can he be replaced at Highbury? Standing on the verdant slope of Barnet's Underhill ground after a friendly in July, a seemingly unperturbed Arsene Wenger told us that there was always the chance for a young player to come through, that when Vieira arrived in London in 1996, he wasn't well known. But having said that, Arsenal paid £3.5million for the Senegal-born midfielder, which scarcely suggests he was even then an anonymous figure. In fact, he had already played for the French Under-21 team.

On the face of it, it is hard to see Arsenal finding anyone to do what Vieira did for them at his dynamic, athletic, long-legged best. Even last season, there were occasions he was the powerfully dominant figure we knew he could be.

The Gunners have undoubted young midfield talent in Spaniard Cesc Fabregas, still a teenager, and Frenchman Mathieu Flamini. But neither has the physical force, the supreme authority of Vieira. Nor can one see Newcastle's Jermaine Jenas, touted as a transfer target to replace Vieira, being as great a force. The young Englishman is talented but inconsistent and often injured.

As for Liverpool, their behaviour regarding Michael Owen has been consistently opaque. Unsurprisingly, it was claimed that he wanted to

'It is hard to see Arsenal finding anyone to do what Vieira did for them at his dynamic, athletic, long-legged best'

● 19/07/05

Take that...Cisse scores for Liverpool in their 3-0 second leg win over TNS in the Champions League

● 20/07/05

Saying it with flowers...David Beckham is welcomed in Xianghe county, near Beijing, during Real Madrid's pre-season tour of the Far East

● 20/07/05

Friendly fire...new Juventus signing Patrick Vieira takes on Milan's Massimo Ambrosini in the TIM Trophy in Trieste

'If Woodward can't even get rugby right, what earthly use could he be to Southampton?'

leave Real Madrid to return to Anfield, and by the time you read this he may even have done so, or gone instead to Manchester United. But I still cannot understand why he wanted to leave Liverpool and his opulent abode in the first place, nor why manager Rafael Benitez was so happy to let him go. He received a mere £8m or so, plus an obscure Real Madrid reserve, Antonio Nunez, now shipped back to Spain.

It was still more incomprehensible to me that there was talk of Benitez being frustrated by the failure to see Steven Gerrard move to Chelsea for an astronomical figure because the manger wouldn't have the £6m or so to buy Peter Crouch from Southampton. Crouch rather than Owen? Seriously? I am not decrying the merits of the 6ft 7in Crouch. Despite his towering height, he is a neat, adroit, technically talented player. But how to compare him with a World Cup star like Owen?

And since Benitez then paid so expensively for yet another Spaniard, goalkeeper Jose Reina from Villarreal, Valencia midfielder Mohamed Sissoko and, finally, Crouch himself, financial resources were clearly not lacking anyway.

WHATEVER possessed Southampton to approach Sir Clive Woodward? It seemed a fatuous notion at the time. How could a rugby man, whatever his success, move effortlessly into soccer and flourish?

Then, alas for Woodward, came the monumental fiasco of the Lions' tour of New Zealand, where they lost all three Test matches.

Woodward took a bloated party of players on the tour and initially put a disastrous reliance on waning Englishmen. If he can't even get rugby right, whatever he accomplished in the World Cup, what earthly use could he be to Southampton?

HOW SERIOUSLY should we take Brazil's 4-1 victory over Argentina in the Confederations Cup Final, which came so hard on the heels of their 3-1 defeat in Buenos Aires in a World Cup qualifier?

True, Argentina were without their two first-choice strikers, Hernan Crespo and Javier Saviola, in Frankfurt. But it was the defence that so seriously shipped water. By the final stages, enormous gaps were appearing, allowing Cicinho, the Sao Paulo right-back, a prairie of space and the chance to cross lethal balls in his own time.

Yet up against the well-organised Mexicans during the group stage, Brazil couldn't score at all. Without wingers – spurning the great tradition of Julinho, Garrincha and Jairzinho – they failed to penetrate the packed Mexican defence, which functioned almost as well against Argentina in the semi-finals, where they lost only on penalties.

Brazil's defence, by contrast, criminally neglected the ever-dangerous Jared Borgetti at a corner, allowing him to head Mexico's winner.

We do know, however, that Adriano, with his formidable left foot and his power, will be a major threat, whether he is supported by Ronaldinho, as he was during the Confederations Cup, or partnered by Ronaldo.

IT IS HARD to imagine there will be much sympathy among Premiership clubs for Chelsea's billionaire owner, Roman Abramovich, who is now being pursued in court in, of all places, the British Virgin Islands by another Russian oligarch, Chalva Tchigirinsky.

The latter alleges that his Britain-based firm, Sibir, has been robbed of its 50 per cent share in the joint oil venture Sibneft-Yugra (Sibneft is Abramovich's company).

Tchigirinsky makes no bones about it. "This is war," he thunders, and major British organisations such as the Prudential are in his corner.

Their allegation is that they discovered to their horror that their share in the joint venture had mysteriously and illicitly been reduced from 50 per cent to a mere 1 per cent. They demand that 50 per cent of those shares, reckoned to be worth a cool £1.1billion, be delivered into the custody of a court receiver, plus some £550,000-worth of assets.

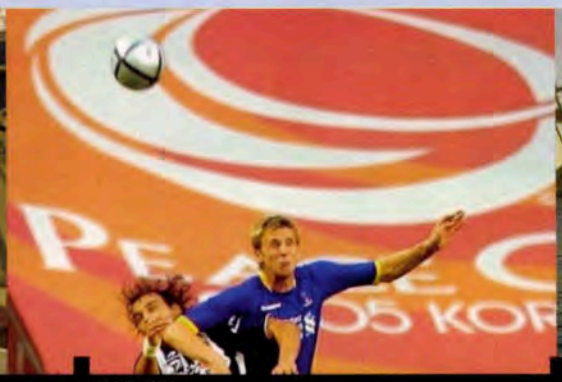
Perhaps most interesting and potentially revelatory of all, Abramovich will be requested by the court to furnish a complete list of his assets – something that has so far been enveloped by mystery.

Oops...Argentina's defence is in trouble as they try to repel a Brazilian attack during the Confederations Cup Final

Read Brian Glanville's weekly column at www.worldsoccer.com

● 21/07/05

Buy, buy...new Schalke signings Fabian Ernst and Kevin Kuranyi show off their new shirts



● 21/07/05

Up for it...Tottenham's Calum Davenport gets above Real Sociedad's Darko Kovacevic during the Peace Cup in Korea

● 22/07/05

Pointing the way...Guus Hiddink confirms he is to take charge of the Australian national team

THE LOWDOWN ON...

SAO PAULO

What's all the fuss about?

A fair question given the size of the fuss. After Sao Paulo won the Libertadores Cup their fans went on the rampage – 150 were injured, there were more than 70 arrests, 31 buses were vandalised and the city's underground system suffered its worst damage ever. In part it was an explosion of the all-too-present tensions of big-city Brazil, in part it was a release of the pent-up emotions of fans who had waited more than a decade for a major trophy.

What's their history?

Formed in 1930, re-launched five years later, Sao Paulo were late starters among Brazil's major clubs. But with the support of the city's elite they soon made up for lost time, dominating the local championship in the next decade. Nowadays they are renowned for the quality of their youth development work (producing the likes of Kaka and Julio Baptista), but previously they were famed for signing big-name players at the veteran stage (Freidenreich, Leonidas, Zizinho, Gerson). Their structure is the envy of their rivals, and since the national championship was launched in 1971 they have picked up more points than any other club. Sao Paulo have also played an important role in the growth of the Libertadores Cup. Brazil had been somewhat half-hearted about the competition until Tele Santana's attractive side won the title in 1992 and 1993. They have now become the first Brazilian club to win the Cup for a third time.

'Sao Paulo are renowned for the quality of youth development work, and their structure is the envy of their rivals'

Don't mention...

Argentina. Sao Paulo's Libertadores campaign was marked by conflict with Argentinian clubs. There was the racism row when Quilmes defender Leandro Desabato was arrested for allegedly abusing striker Grafite. There were attacks on River Plate supporters and their team coach when the two sides met in the semi-final. And there's the fact that city rivals Corinthians have become an Argentinian colony, with the likes of Carlos Tevez, Seba Dominguez and now Javier Mascherano on their books.

Ground for envy...Sao Paulo treasure their impressive Morumbi stadium

Who picks the team?

Fresh from resigning as coach of Peru, Paulo Autuori took over in early May, towards the end of the Libertadores group stage, and steered them to the title. He had previously won the competition with Cruzeiro in 1997, and the national championship with Botafogo in 1995.

What's his philosophy?

Autuori has traditionally favoured 4-4-2 but, essentially a pragmatist, only occasionally tinkered with the 3-5-2 formation he inherited. The always astute Tostao sums him up as "calm without being apathetic, disciplinarian without being authoritarian, demanding without being feared, scientific without being dogmatic and vain without showing off". On winning the Libertadores he paid full tribute to his predecessors Emerson Leao and Cuca, confirming his status as one of the most decent men in Brazilian football.

What's their stadium like?

A giant bowl in an upmarket district, the Morumbi stadium is the club's pride and joy. They practically sacrificed their chances of titles in the 1960s to ensure it was built. One of the world's biggest privately-owned stadiums. For the 1992 Libertadores Final, against Newell's Old Boys, the Morumbi attracted 105,185 – the biggest crowd in the competition's history. Current capacity is 73,500.

Tim Vickery

● 23/07/05

On my head...Jay-Jay Okocha sports the Premier League Asia Trophy shield after Bolton triumph in Thailand

● 24/07/05

Moment of victory...the USA team pose with the Gold Cup trophy after beating Panama on penalties in the Final

GOOD MONTH FOR...

Treble top...Ballack

Michael Ballack... voted Germany's Player of the Year by *Kicker* magazine for the third time, after 2002 and 2003.

Austria... Rapid Wien's Germany-born captain Steffen Hofmann opted to take Austrian nationality and make himself available for the national team.

Panama...defied the odds to reach the Final of the CONCACAF Gold Cup – the region's national team championship – and lost only on penalties to hosts USA.

Artmedia Petrzalka...shock 5-0 winners over Celtic in the first leg of their Champions League second qualifying round tie.

BAD MONTH FOR...

Jan Simak...the Sparta Prague midfielder underwent treatment for alcoholism less than a year after being treated for depression.

Ossie Ardiles...fired as coach of J.League side Tokyo Verdy, who conceded 23 goals in five games before the axe fell.

Internazionale...ridiculed for calling off their pre-season tour of England because of fears over the London terrorist bombings, then reversing their decision and turning up, but without several key players.

Mike Hanke...one of Germany's rising stars was handed a two-match international ban after being sent off in the Confederations Cup third-place play-off, making him unavailable for the first two games of next summer's World Cup.

No end of problems...Simak

Notes & quotes

"Obviously we will not be world champions. That would be a miracle."
Koln coach Uwe Rapolder tries to dampen down the euphoria sweeping Germany in the wake of the national team's good performances at the Confederations Cup.

"Here, there's too many spies, too many people talking behind my back."
Roma bad boy Antonio Cassano on why he refused to play in a warm-up game.

"Red Star Belgrade are the strongest team in eastern Europe."
New Red Star coach Walter Zenga, the former Italian international keeper, mistakes 2005 for 1991.

"I want to make the impossible possible."
Guus Hiddink on being appointed coach of Australia, which he will combine with his work at PSV Eindhoven.

"I'm the commander and the players must obey."
Real Madrid boss Vanderlei Luxemburgo lays down the law to his charges on the eve of a vital season for the club.

Giving orders...Luxemburgo

"He has so much charisma. Even the opposition fans will love his style and goals."
Besiktas president Yildirim Demiroren gets carried away with the signing of Brazilian striker Ailton from Schalke.

● 25/07/05

Heads together...Real Madrid's Luis Figo and Takahito Soma of Tokyo Verdy vie during a friendly

● 26/07/05

Still finding his feet...Man Utd new boy Park Ji-sung takes a tumble against Beijing Hyundai

● 26/07/05

On target...Jamie Carragher scores for Liverpool against FBK Kaunas

● 26/07/05

Tough tackle...David Gigauri of Dinamo Tbilisi is stopped by Brondby's Kim Daugaard

WS WORLD SOCCER **Jim Holden**

D-day approaches

Decision time for Owen and the frustrated superstars

MICHAEL OWEN earns a king's ransom at Real Madrid. He is recognised worldwide as a galactico. He has an outstanding chance of winning a Champions League title. Yet every competitive fibre of his being has been telling him he should move to an inferior club.

Such is the angst of the talented modern footballer. And the more talent they have, the more agonising the dilemma becomes.

Do they join the super-squads of the elite clubs of Europe and risk spending months or years warming the bench? Or do they move and choose to revel in the most fundamental enjoyment of the game, playing in matches, while knowing it diminishes their status and gives scant chance of a medal to show for their brilliance?

The conundrum has been even more acute at the start of a World Cup season. Players know either path is fraught with danger and could mean rejection from the national team in the tournament that still does most to fire the imaginations of real footballers.

Nobody with ambition wants to miss a starring role at the World Cup. Owen certainly doesn't, but he is one among many. The England squad has a clutch of players in a similar position.

There is no right answer for these men. Only best guesses.

Owen is good enough to play in every game for Real, a point proved by his superb goal ratio in the limited time he was given on the pitch last season. But it would be a massive gamble to stay and hope to be selected regularly ahead of Ronaldo and Raul – and if that gamble failed, how damaging to his sharpness and touch would another 12 months of inactivity be?

Strong rumours suggested Owen was hoping for a move – but only to another super-club like Manchester United or Chelsea.

But would Stamford Bridge be any better? There are massive question marks there for several young Englishmen tempted by the riches of Roman Abramovich, notably Joe Cole.

He is currently a first-choice in the England team because of the way he flourished at Chelsea last season when Arjen Robben was injured. Cole would not have been picked by Sven Goran Eriksson otherwise, but now faces an Owen-style battle to keep his club place with Robben recovered and another English flier, Shaun Wright-Phillips, signed for £21million.

You have to wonder, too, whether Wright-Phillips has made the right move. There are no guarantees he will play regularly, such is the depth of Jose Mourinho's squad. Damien Duff may well qualify for the World Cup with the Republic of Ireland, so the question is relevant to him as well. Can he risk a season on the bench at Stamford Bridge?

Another England player, another Owen, took the plunge. Owen Hargreaves turned down a move to Middlesbrough from Bayern Munich, the words of Bayern boss Felix Magath a key to his decision. "Our club is better for his international ambitions," said Magath. "If he plays in the Champions League with us his chances will be much better."

'Every competitive fibre of his being has been telling Owen that he should move to an inferior club'

But he would say that, wouldn't he? And the most important word Magath said was the shortest, "if".

Jon Dahl Tomasson of Denmark took a different option to Hargreaves. He scores as many goals for his country as Owen, but was just as peripheral at Milan last season as was the Englishman at Madrid. The Dane chose to move away, settling for Stuttgart. However much he adored Milan, and the lifestyle he had grown accustomed to, Tomasson wanted to play football every week.

There is no guarantee his decision will prove right for him. But it is surely better for football as a whole. A talent like Tomasson's should not be kept away from public show.

Every player must do what he feels is best for himself, but isn't it a desperate shame for the game that with every passing season more and more dazzling, world-class footballers are paid millions of pounds to sit glumly on the sidelines?

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Taking a stand

Santos win respect for resisting Real Madrid's attempts to sign star man Robinho

BRIAN HOMEWOOD in Rio de Janeiro

MINUTES AFTER BRAZIL beat Argentina 4-1 to win the Confederations Cup in Germany, Robinho was saying goodbye to Santos supporters and announcing that he was on his way to Real Madrid. "I have spoken to Real Madrid and it will be good for my career to go now," he told Globo television while his team-mates samba-ed around Frankfurt's Waldstadion pitch. "Spain is an ideal country for Brazilian players and I know [Real coach] Vanderlei Luxemburgo very well."

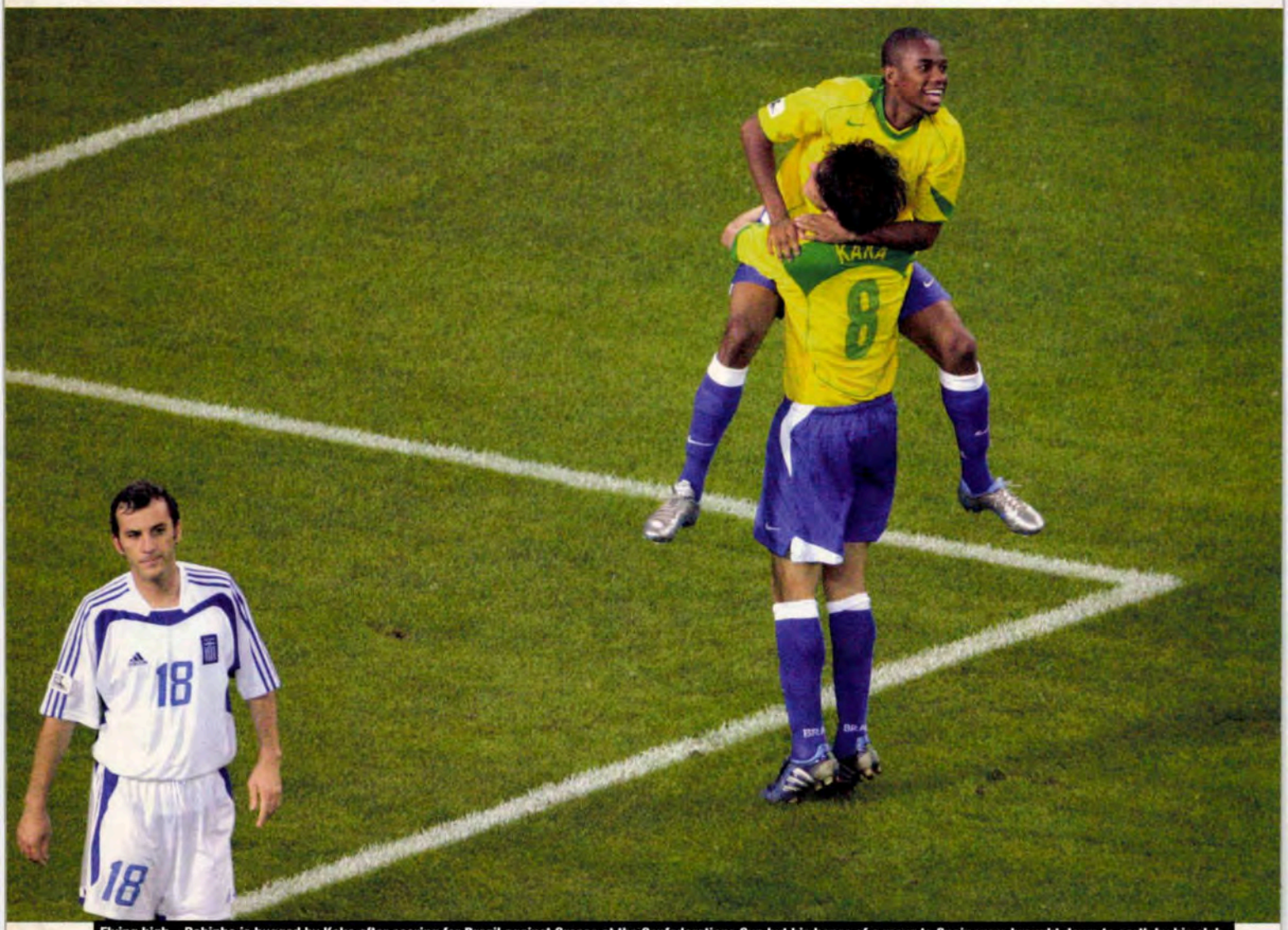
There was one slight problem, however. Robinho had forgotten to tell Santos, the club that raised him and helped turn him into one of the world's most exciting players.

Tired of reading "Robinho set to join Real Madrid" stories since the middle of last year, furious Santos president Marcelo Teixeira was on the phone to Brazilian television within minutes. He accused Real Madrid of speaking to Robinho without permission and insisted his club would not be bullied. "It's a lack of respect for Santos. Real Madrid might have economic and financial power but it doesn't mean that they can do what they want, when they want," Teixeira said, expressing a sentiment that is likely to find plenty of sympathetic ears around the world. "It won't be because of this that the player will go to Real Madrid – on the contrary."

What both Robinho and Real appeared to have forgotten was that the player had signed a contract with the Brazilian champions until 2008. When it finishes, he can leave for free. Until then, any club who want to buy him before then will have to cough up a £28million penalty. Contrary to speculation, Teixeira had managed to stick to his guns, at least until we went to press.

"There is no situation today that is favourable to any negotiation with Real Madrid unless it involves the penalty clause," said Teixeira. "Robinho grew up and became valuable at Santos, and we need him to stay. It's still not the moment for him to go."

Robinho trudged back to Brazil but ignored orders to resume



Flying high...Robinho is hugged by Kaka after scoring for Brazil against Greece at the Confederations Cup but his hopes of a move to Spain were brought down to earth by his club

training. "At the moment, I'm not in the right frame of mind to play in Brazil," he said. "It's difficult to say that I don't want to play for Santos any more, but that's how life goes."

Robinho claimed Santos had promised he could leave after their Libertadores Cup campaign. That ended on June 15 when Santos, without Robinho, who was at the Confederations Cup, were knocked out by Atletico Paranaense in the quarter-finals.

"In October last year, when PSV and Benfica were interested in me, the president told me he would let me go after the Libertadores for 10m euros [£7m]," said Robinho. "Real Madrid are offering $25m [£14m] and he doesn't want to let me go. I hope he keeps his promise."

After a 10-day impasse, Real Madrid sent a delegation to Santos, but Teixeira refused to receive them, hearing they were offering only £17.2m.

Most Brazilians sided with Santos, firstly because they are fed up with players regarding contracts as mere inconveniences (come on down, Ronaldo) and secondly because they are tired of seeing European clubs pay much higher fees among themselves than to clubs in Brazil. Gremio, for example, received only £1.3m for Ronaldinho from Paris Saint-Germain, even though he had done enough to show he was a world-class player by the time he left them.

The episode also damaged Robinho's squeaky-clean image – although this had taken its first blow when he celebrated a goal against Paraguay by making a "V" sign, which is associated with a mobile phone company. There were reports that he had been paid a fat sum in cash for the gesture.

"Nobody forced Robinho to sign until 2008," wrote Luiz Zanin in the *Estado de Sao Paulo*. "If he did, it was because he saw advantages in doing so. The relationship with the fans is much easier to break. It was wrecked the moment Robinho said he did not want to play again for the club."

Huge exodus

Elsewhere, the player drain continued, forcing clubs to rebuild their teams in the middle of the Brazilian championship. The competition runs from April to December and is routinely hit by a huge exodus in July, the European close season.

This season was supposed to have been different. Federation president Ricardo Teixeira last year announced a new rule under which clubs could sell players abroad only during a brief transfer window in December and January.

This looked to be unenforceable at the time and so it proved in April when Teixeira said the rule was merely a recommendation and it was up to the clubs to enforce it.

Privileged...Romario

Vasco da Gama, second bottom of the national championship after 12 rounds, named Renato Portaluppi as coach, in succession to the sacked Dario Lourenco, apparently on the basis that he is prepared to tolerate the whims of 39-year-old Romario. Backed by Vasco president Eurico Miranda, the veteran forward enjoys all manner of privileges, such as training and even playing when he feels like it. Once on the field, he rarely moves away from the opposition's penalty area. Despite this, Portaluppi said the team would be built around the 1994 World Cup winner. "It's Romario plus 10," the new coach told a media conference as his audience tried to keep a straight face. "Romario's an idol and a player who I admire and I trust. So, yes, he's going to be the captain of my team. And he's going to train."

You can't blame players for wanting to leave. If they do not have relatives kidnapped (five in the past year) or get robbed at gunpoint in the street themselves, they still run the risk of being seriously injured on the field.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger was given a taste of domestic Brazilian football after a brief visit to Atletico Mineiro, who sold him Gilberto Silva.

Wenger, according to onlookers, watched bemused as Atletico's 3-1 win over Flamengo produced nearly 80 fouls, two sendings-off, a farcical penalty, non-stop play-acting and a fight – all part of a typical afternoon in the Brazilian championship.

After 12 rounds, rank outsiders Ponte Preta led the table with 26 points, one ahead of Internacional and two clear of Santos.

Corinthians climbed to fifth after taking their post-Media Sports Investments spending spree towards the £35m mark by signing 21-year-old Argentina midfielder Javier Mascherano from River Plate.

Mascherano, who joined compatriots Carlos Tevez and Seba Dominguez at the club, made an inspirational debut as Corinthians beat arch-rivals Palmeiras 3-1. Corinthians' revival has led to the appointment of Marcio Bittencourt as permanent coach, having initially been given the job on an interim basis following the decision to sack Daniel Passarella.

Bittencourt started under the long shadow cast by former national team boss Emerson Leao, who returned home after just a month in Japan with Vissel Kobe and was reported to be Corinthians' first choice. To Bittencourt's intense relief, however, Leao became the fourth coach of the year at Palmeiras after Paulo Bonamigo quit in the dressing-room following a 2-1 home defeat by Fortaleza.

Bonamigo was one of four coaches to leave their jobs on the same turbulent weekend. Paulo Campos left Paysandu when fans attempted to break into the dressing-room following a 2-1 home defeat by Cruzeiro, Dario Lourenco departed Vasco da Gama after they lost 1-0 at Flamengo (see panel) and Edson Gaucho was sacked by Goias after losing 3-1 at home to Brasiliense.

'It's lack of respect for Santos ...Real Madrid can't do what they want, when they want'

Santos president Marcelo Teixeira slams the Spanish club over the Robinho affair

Two-goal hero…Panama's Ricardo Phillips goes on the attack again during the 3-2 semi-final victory over Colombia

Trophy without triumph

The USA hardly deserved to win the Gold Cup, played on home soil

PAUL GARDNER in New York

CONCACAF'S BEST-LAID plans for its most ambitious Gold Cup yet went astray, of course. The schedule called for the semi-finals and Final to be played at Giants stadium, New Jersey, and the hope was that the final four teams would include Mexico, the USA, and guest side Colombia, the seeded teams in the three four-team groups and the teams rated as the main crowd-pullers.

Colombia, with a decidedly below-strength squad, screwed up that arrangement by failing to win Group A – indeed, they barely scraped through to the quarter-finals after finishing third behind Honduras and Panama.

This meant Colombia would meet Mexico, the winners of Group C, in the last eight and therefore that one of the crowd-pullers were doomed to miss the semi-finals.

The Mexicans had started the tournament badly, with a 2-1 loss to South Africa, another below-strength guest team, but had then recovered to beat Guatemala and Jamaica. Colombia, with defeats to both Panama and Honduras, had survived thanks to a 2-0 win over Trinidad & Tobago.

Surprisingly, it was the Mexicans who went out in the quarter-final, beaten 2-1, with Colombia's winning goal coming in the 75th minute from a hopeful 40-yard shot by Abel Aguilar that sailed embarrassingly over the head and flailing arms of goalkeeper Moises Munoz and into the Mexican net. Mexico dominated the rest of the game, created plenty of chances, but in the absence of top scorer Jared Borgetti couldn't finish them off.

The importance of Mexico as a crowd-pleaser could be judged from the 60,000-plus attendance at Houston's Reliant stadium. The

day before, up in Boston, Group B winners USA beat Jamaica in another quarter-final, but the crowd was only 22,108.

In the other quarter-finals, Honduras stormed into a 3-0 lead within 30 minutes against Costa Rica, who only had themselves to blame – twice they gave the ball away in their own penalty area, allowing Wilmer Velasquez and Milton Nunez to score; Danilo Turcios got the other goal. Costa Rica replied with goals from Christian Bolanos and Bryan Ruiz but couldn't find an equaliser.

Panama took care of South Africa on penalties, after a 1-1 draw.

The Panamanians thus went on to a semi-final against Colombia, whom they had beaten 1-0 in the very first game of the tournament. In a lively game before 41,721 at Giants stadium, Panama's Ricardo Phillips scored after 12 minutes with a flashing near-post header, and Jorge Dely Valdes added a second 13 minutes later.

On the half-hour mark, Colombian defender Jaime Castrillon powered in a header from a corner – the ball hit the bar and then rebounded off the back of goalkeeper Jaime Penedo before it was hooked away by Julio Medina. The Colombians protested that the ball had crossed the line – and they were surely correct – but the referee allowed play to go on.

Panama progress

Colombia did get on the scoreboard in the 63rd minute with a Jairo Patino goal, only for Phillips to score his second on a Panama counter-attack 10 minutes later. Patino then scored again with a tremendous 25-yard pile-driver to make it 3-2, and Colombia almost equalised with seconds left when a Tressor Moreno shot clipped the outside of a post.

Panama's win set up a Final against the USA, who had eked out a 2-1 win over Honduras. First blood, on the half-hour mark, went to the Hondurans when Nunez slotted a perfect ball through the middle of the American defence for Ivan Guerrero to beat keeper Kasey Keller from 20 yards out.

With only five minutes remaining – with the Hondurans still leading 1-0 and with USA coach Bruce Arena having been ejected in the 59th minute for swearing at the referee (see panel) – the hosts equalised. Honduran defender Erick Vallecillo, trying to clear the ball, poked it into the path of John O'Brien, who ran it into the net. Then, a minute into added time, Oguchi Onyewu came forward to powerfully head home a Landon Donovan free-kick.

A win for the USA, but hardly a convincing one. "We were terrible for the first 20, maybe 30, minutes," admitted Keller. Arena blamed the grass – specially laid down for the Gold Cup – for the USA's poor performance. Donovan agreed: "It was slippery, it was soft," he said.

'We were terrible for the first 20, maybe 30, minutes'

US keeper Kasey Keller gives his verdict after the semi against Honduras

Looking forward to the Final, Panama's coach, Jose Hernandez, said all the politically correct things: "Playing the United States can only help Panama's football. It is a pleasure to play against them and to learn from them."

A not unreasonable position when one considers that the USA are ranked sixth in the world, while Panama are ranked 83rd. Panama's chances were not improved by the suspension of two key players – Phillips and defender Luis Moreno, the latter sent off in the semi-final. At the last minute, Moreno was reprieved – the CONCACAF appeals committee had looked at the tape of the Colombia game and decided that his second yellow card was not justified. He was cleared to play in the Final.

Neither Eddie Pope nor Pablo Mastroeni, both injured in the semi-final, was fit to play for the US.

It was hardly a classic Final, the first half, in particular, was scrappy, full of unforced errors, with little goalmouth action. There was little good football to be seen, but when it did come, it came – despite the yawning gap in world rankings – from Panama.

In the second half, both goalkeepers had to make difficult saves, including one finger-tip effort from Keller to turn away Luis Tejada's brilliant bicycle-kick attempt. But Keller was lucky when a close-range shot from Jorge Dely Valdes hit the crossbar.

Panama had their share of good fortune: US substitute Santino Quaranta's low cross beat keeper Penedo and ran across the open goal, where Clint Dempsey somehow failed to make any contact at all.

After 120 minutes, the game was still locked at 0-0, and penalties it would have to be. It was all over in five minutes, and it was a disaster for Panama, who managed only one goal from four attempts. The USA hit three out of four.

Disappointment for Panama, even though the country had achieved their best finish in a major tournament. Triumph for the USA, though their win was hardly deserved, and it is not clear what exactly it means. Certainly, the USA are CONCACAF champions, but whether they will play as such at the next Confederations Cup is debatable. That depends on when the next edition of that tournament is staged; if it is in four years' time, then another Gold Cup will have been played (at the moment it is a biennial event), with the possibility of new champions.

Sent off...Arena

One hour into the Gold Cup semi-final against Honduras, US coach Bruce Arena added another "first" to his impressive list of achievements: he got himself thrown out of the game. Annoyed that his combative midfielder Chris Armas had been penalised for a foul, Arena jumped up to protest. Jamaican referee Peter Prendergast came over, spoke to fourth official Carlos Batres, and Arena was on his way to the dressing-room.

After the game, Arena admitted using "a four-letter word", but felt the expulsion was harsh. He hinted at an appeal, but no appeal was made, so assistant Glenn Myernick, not Arena, was on the bench for the Final win against Panama.

It was not the first time Arena had tangled with Prendergast. During a World Cup qualifier in 2000, the official's award of a last-minute penalty kick to Costa Rica caused Arena to explode. FIFA later ruled that Arena had been abusive, and handed him a one-game suspension.

Return to glory…Barcelona parade through the city to celebrate winning La Liga last season but, off the field, trouble was brewing

Friends and enemies

Champions Barcelona have been rocked by an acrimonious boardroom split that could threaten the future of Ronaldinho at the club. Sid Lowe reports

THEIRS WAS A dream ticket, a marriage made in heaven. Joan Laporta and Sandro Rosell were young, handsome and determined, bright, qualified and ambitious. They were idealists who saw things the same way. They had known each other for over 20 years, were the best of friends and together they were going to change the world.

It was the summer of 2003 and together Jan, as friends called him, and Sandro were busy fulfilling their boyhood dream of leading Barcelona back to glory after a four-year drought without a trophy.

With Rosell as his friend and ally, the architect of his campaign, Laporta was running for the presidency of Barcelona. Elections had been called following the resignation of Joan Gaspart, the former vice-president to Josep Lluis Nunez and the bumbling disaster who, upon taking over in the summer of 2000, had plunged the club into crisis and £100million of debt. Fit and fresh, Jan, a prominent local lawyer, and Sandro, a former executive at Nike in Brazil, promised radical change.

the heart of the club, and Rosell agreed. Their team was made up of gifted, fresh-faced idealists ready to rescue Barca.

Laporta and Rosell promised a democratic, accountable, transparent, well-run club that would recover on and off the pitch. They promised to "pull up the carpets" in search of the rumoured malpractice and financial shenanigans of their predecessors. They talked of teamwork and doing things right, through consultation.

They also promised David Beckham, of course, but no matter: Rosell brought Ronaldinho, a personal friend of his, to Catalonia instead. And then when the brilliant, grinning Brazilian turned up, Laporta played head tennis with him in his office. There could be no better symbol of the new mood sweeping through the club.

In their first year together, president Jan and vice-president Sandro turned round much of the deficit and carefully built a team. The side overtook Real Madrid to finish second behind Valencia after a horrible start. And if that felt like a success, then came the real success: the following season, with Samuel Eto'o and Deco joining, Barca won the League title in wonderful style, collecting their first trophy in six years.

It should have been perfect and they should have lived happily ever after. But it wasn't and they didn't. Within days of Barcelona clinching the championship against Levante in Valencia, and with half of the city still nursing a hangover, Rosell had resigned, bitterly attacking Laporta for being unfaithful to their marital vows, the project they started together. He was joined by fellow directors Jordi Mones, Antoni Freixa, Jordi Moix and Xavier Faus. Josep Maria Bartomeu had already resigned.

The champions were faced with an institutional crisis. Laporta accused Rosell of disloyalty. Their collapsing relationship, already an open secret, was public and their divorce was consummated at last. It had been coming for a long time. Theirs was not such an idyllic partnership, not least because there were three people in this marriage: Laporta, Rosell and Laporta's true love, Johan Cruyff.

Laporta was Cruyff's lawyer and friend. Cruyff was his boyhood hero, arguably the best player the club ever had and the coach who led the Dream Team to four successive League titles and the European Cup. Cruyff was a legend in Catalonia and a sworn enemy of Nunez.

Cruyff held no official post at the club but, much as he always denied it, became Laporta's adviser. On everything. He was the man who wasn't there, the power behind the throne, a Catalan Cardinal Richelieu. He was behind Barcelona trying to sign fellow Dutchman Guus Hiddink as coach before turning to his other suggestion, Frank Rijkaard, with whom Cruyff shares business interests. Ditto the appointment of Txiki Begiristain, who played under him in the Dream team, as director of football.

Cruyff pulled strings

Cruyff, strong-willed and self-obsessed, did not stop there, as increasingly it was him pulling strings behind the scenes, even popping into the dressing-room on occasion. Not on the board, he was accountable to no one.

Rosell was not impressed. He resented Cruyff's growing influence, the fact that he encouraged Laporta to take decisions unilaterally. Cruyff had always complained about what he called the *entorno* – the entourage, the environment, the institutions and people that surrounded the club, influencing its workings without actually having anything to do with it. Now he was the *entorno*.

Rosell also disliked the obsession with the Dutch. Privately, he couldn't understand the fascination with "a country of losers" – even

Laporta had been a key member of Elefant Blau, an independent group of Barca members and supporters campaigning to maintain the club's traditional democratic management and ownership by their fans. He was a fierce critic of the nepotism, self-interest and dictatorial, autocratic style employed by Nunez. He believed that fans were

Brilliant Brazilian...Ronaldinho, a personal friend of Rosell, joined Barca in summer 2003

The £85m offer to Ronnie

Sandro Rosell's resignation from the Barcelona board led to concerns that he would try to persuade Ronaldinho to leave the club. Rosell had formed a close friendship with the Brazilian when he was the Nike executive responsible for the company's 10-year sponsorship of the Brazilian national team. He was credited with persuading the player to quit Paris Saint-Germain for Camp Nou in 2003.

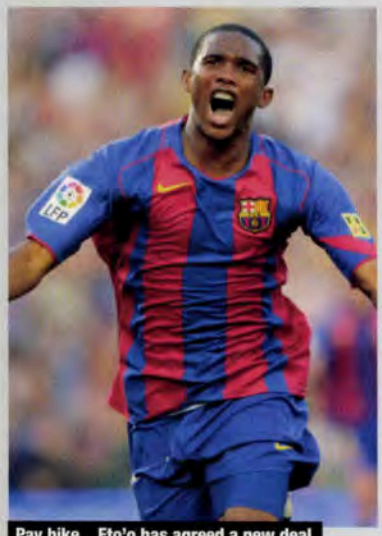
So far, Rosell has kept a low profile since leaving the club, while Ronaldinho has yet to accept the offer of an improved, extended deal.

The response of Barca president Joan Laporta to the boardroom crisis has been to offer Ronaldinho and a number of other leading players new long-term contracts on vastly improved salaries.

Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o and midfielders Xavi and Deco have all agreed new deals in recent months. All are now contracted until 2010. Eto'o's annual salary has risen to £3.4m, while his contract includes a buy-out clause set at more than £100m.

But Ronaldinho, significantly, has not yet signed the deal on offer to him. His contract runs until 2008, but Laporta is offering a new one, worth £85m in wages and bonuses, which could keep him at the club until 2014.

In his first public comments since arriving back in Barcelona following the summer break, the Brazilian insisted he was "happy and relaxed" with his existing contract, though discussions about the new offer were "on the right track". He added: "My priority is to prepare well for the new season. I leave all the rest to my brother [also his agent] to sort out. My idea is to spend many years here. I can't imagine a situation where I am not at Barcelona."



Pay hike...Eto'o has agreed a new deal

The Barcelona "menage a trois"...(from left) Joan Laporta, Sandro Rosell and Johan Cruyff

though every League title Barca have won in the past 15 years has been under a Dutch coach. He also resented the fact that Cruyff, from his public soapboxes – a newspaper column and radio slot – cast doubt on Ronaldinho. In his eyes, it proved that the Dutchman who's always right was wrong, very wrong.

Cruyff, in turn, resented the fact that Rosell showed him little deference. That there was none of the sycophancy with which he was normally treated in Catalonia. When Rosell got up to take a phone call during a meal with Laporta and Cruyff, the Dutchman was furious, considering it a disgraceful lack of respect.

For Laporta, Cruyff could do no wrong. Nor, backed by Johan, could he. Some on the board began to feel uncomfortable with the extent to which Laporta, for all that talk of democracy and openness, was developing a presidential air. That presidency had become a power trip. He seemed to consider himself a head of state; they were uncomfortable with trips around the world and his appropriation of the club as his own. "The institution has become confused with the person," complained one director.

When Laporta recently stripped down to his pants and screamed abuse at airport staff who refused to let him through a security check, some of those who had departed considered it proof that they were right. Especially when it was revealed that Barca were investigating ways of gaining Laporta some sort of diplomatic immunity to prevent it happening again.

But the seeds had been sown earlier. After Barcelona defeated Real Madrid at the end of the 2003-04 season, fans at the airport chanted "Presidente! Presidente!" Basking in the glory, Laporta had, said critics, begun to see himself as a kind of JFK. Privately, those critics included Rosell. He was seen speaking to Begiristain on the phone, muttering "power divides", before hanging up.

Indeed it does – and it also brings paranoia and resentment.

Laporta feared plot

Laporta began to see divisions in the board as a plot against him, a conspiracy to take over the presidency. A group of directors had indeed begun to coalesce around Rosell and when he and three others resigned this summer, Laporta revealed his fears and insecurities.

"They had a pre-arranged strategy to erode the board," Laporta insisted. "They have advisers, strategy leaders who co-ordinated their actions, who set up visits to supporters' clubs where people shouted against the president and they did nothing about it."

That paranoia was made worse by the relationship Rosell enjoyed with the players; Ronaldinho was seen as his signing, so Laporta cultivated Eto'o as his own. Fearful Ronaldinho would leave with Rosell, he has since offered him a huge contract, smashing the framework the young guns had laid down when they came in.

With mistrust on both sides, the board split. Some complained that they were no longer allowed to disagree with Laporta on anything without being considered a rival, that he was jealous of those who could overshadow him. They, in turn, appeared jealous of his power, of the fact that he personified the club.

The first main argument centred on Rosell's objections to the way the club's communications department was being run, but there were more – over contracts, the spin-doctoring of negotiations on a possible shirt sponsor, and a huge, public argument about Laporta's decision to sack the successful basketball chief, Svetislav Pesic, on what appeared to be personal, political grounds.

"It's very difficult to trust again," said director Bartomeu, who was demoted because of his opposition to the sacking. "Teamwork has not been accepted, differences of opinion have been taken as dissidence, and dissidence with disloyalty. He's not the Jan that I knew."

Others agreed. Increasingly, Rosell and those close to him became concerned at Laporta's propensity to take decisions on his own, to put personal allies in positions of power and remove dialogue. Rosell found out about some decisions only once they had already been taken.

Laporta was furious, meanwhile, at Rosell's refusal to back Rijkaard. He had been the only board member to rate the coach as a failure at the end of the first season. He had also, Laporta let it be known, spoken to former Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari about taking over.

Word got back to Rijkaard and his relationship with Rosell suffered, the coach publicly insisting that Rosell had tried to get him sacked twice. When Rosell resigned, Laporta claimed that Rosell had embarked upon an "open confrontation with Rijkaard that everyone knew about". Rosell denied it, believing that Laporta had poisoned Rijkaard against him.

More paranoia, perhaps, but Laporta had certainly (and publicly) rallied Begiristain and Rijkaard around him, removing Rosell from the loop. Rosell stopped going to games and by the time the winter transfer window opened last season, their relationship had become irrevocably broken.

Rosell secured the signings of Costinha and Edu, as was his job, only to discover through the press that the club had signed Maxi Lopez and Demetrio Albertini instead. "Can anyone imagine a vice-president in charge of sport not knowing anything about the signings?" asked director Mones when he later presented his resignation.

A public for-the-cameras, clear-the-air dinner and a high-profile board meeting in February merely papered over the cracks. This was a ceasefire, not a lasting peace. Rosell was hanging on to see his job through, to see Barca win the League. When they did, the marriage was over.

Rosell claimed to be leaving because the original dream had been sullied. "The project that group of young people put in place has changed and changed until the management of the club is now carried out without independence, without transparency and without democracy," he said. "That's not what we promised the members. We were going to be different."

Something had gone wrong, and Rosell was clear whose fault it was. "Laporta's problem wasn't with me but with himself; the project that he leads is not the same as the one we fought for. He has an internal battle to fight. Jan, you've changed," he said sadly, adding a stinging attack on the "other man" who'd destroyed their fairytale marriage: "And if I had to say one thing to Cruyff, I'd say: 'Johan, get out of there and leave Jan to it.'" ●

The new arrivals

Still going Dutch...Barca's Van Bommel

With the emphasis on signing existing stars to longer contracts, Barcelona's transfer activity has been restricted to midfielder Mark Van Bommel from PSV and forward Santi Ezquerro from Athletic Bilbao.

Over in Madrid, Real's pursuit of Santos starlet Robinho was unresolved at press time, with the Spanish club angering the Brazilians by negotiating directly with the player's agent.

Real completed the signings of two Uruguayans – combative midfielder Pablo Garcia from Osasuna and right-sided defender Carlos Diogo from River Plate.

Across town Atletico have been busy under new Argentinian coach Carlos Bianchi. Mateja Kezman arrived from Chelsea for £5.5m and was joined by Bulgarian midfielder Martin Petrov (Wolfsburg, £6m) and Argentinian striker Maxi Rodriguez (Espanyol, £3.5m).

Champions League qualifiers Villarreal confirmed the permanent signing of Argentina midfielder Juan Roman Riquelme after two seasons on loan from Barcelona. They also signed Argentinian goalkeeper Mariano Barbosa (Banfield).

Valencia, champions in 2004, have sought to improve on a disastrous campaign last season by bringing in a host of new faces, including Brazilian midfielder Edu (Arsenal), Dutch striker Patrick Kluivert (Newcastle), Uruguayan winger Mario Regueiro (Racing Santander) and Levante keeper Juan Luis Mora.

Sevilla prepared for the possible departure of Julio Baptista by signing another Brazilian striker, Luis Fabiano, who has had a disappointing spell at FC Porto, while midfielder Enzo Maresca arrived from Juventus.

French midfielder Stephane Dalmat joined Racing Santander from Internazionale.

Q&A: Xavi

'We can win the lot'

Keir Radnedge hears the Barca midfielder talk up his team's chances

What do you expect from the new season?
A lot. Our ambitions are even higher than last season because of the improvements made to the squad during the summer. We thought we were pretty good last season but the arrival of two outstanding players has, logically, made us even better. Mark Van Bommel is a complete footballer, very good both defensively and going forward. He's a winner, very competitive – the sort of character every team needs. As for [Santi] Ezquerro, he is a strong, versatile front player who can play on the right or left or through the middle. He can force gaps in a defence where none appears to exist.

Isn't Van Bommel a personal threat? Surely he plays in your position?
There's always a lot of competition for places in midfield but that just drives me on. I've been at Barcelona for eight seasons and the more I play, the more I learn. I see competition for places as being good for the team in general and good for me as an individual.

Are there no weaknesses at all?
Perhaps the only player who could make us even better is Thierry Henry but there's not much chance of him leaving Arsenal. Otherwise, I can't see any weaknesses. We have two top players for each position, three for some, and a great deal of quality. We also have a number of versatile players, which is important over a long season. Gio [Van Bronckhorst] can play at full-back or in midfield, [Rafael] Marquez and Edmilson can play stopper or defensive midfield, and Gabri can do just about anything. He's a hugely under-rated player but the sort every coach loves to have in his team. He makes everything look easy.

Can you win the Champions League?
Of course. We have everything it takes to win the lot. Last season I still believe we were better than Chelsea but we just didn't have any luck. That's what you need at the top level when there is so little between the best teams. One bad bounce and you're out. We honestly believe we are good enough to win the Champions League. But while I know many fans see that as the No 1 target, our ambition in the dressing-room is to win everything we enter. That means not only the Champions League but also the Spanish League, Cup and Supercup. We're not kidding ourselves, though. We know it won't be easy.

Is this the best Barcelona team in your time as a senior player?
I think so. It's just about as good as the team I came into first in 1998, the team that won four trophies in two years. We know there's going to be even more pressure on us as champions. But that's nothing compared to the pressure we were under last season after five years without winning anything. Our fans will have high expectations, which is added pressure but a pleasant pressure.

What about the domestic League?
I think we are favourites. We're the ones to beat. Real Madrid and Valencia can run us close. Madrid chased us all the way last season without playing really well. But what I like now is to hear Madrid talking about us so much. In previous years it was the other way round. Now we're the ones who believe in ourselves, and they have to get that self-belief back.

Aren't you afraid that opponents will have worked out how you play now?
Look, everyone knows how Ronaldinho plays but he goes on scoring goals. The same for Samuel Eto'o. Every striker in the League knows how [Carles] Puyol defends but he still goes on beating them to the ball on the ground and in the air, in the tackle.

Do you think the boardroom problems will affect the team?
The only thing that affects the players are the results. Anything off the pitch doesn't come into it. If there were differences between [president Joan] Laporta and [director Sandro] Rosell they didn't affect the dressing-room, but it was probably best if they went their separate ways. That said, I think Sandro was right to advise Johan Cruyff to distance himself a bit from the president. I don't think Sandro's departure will have any effect.

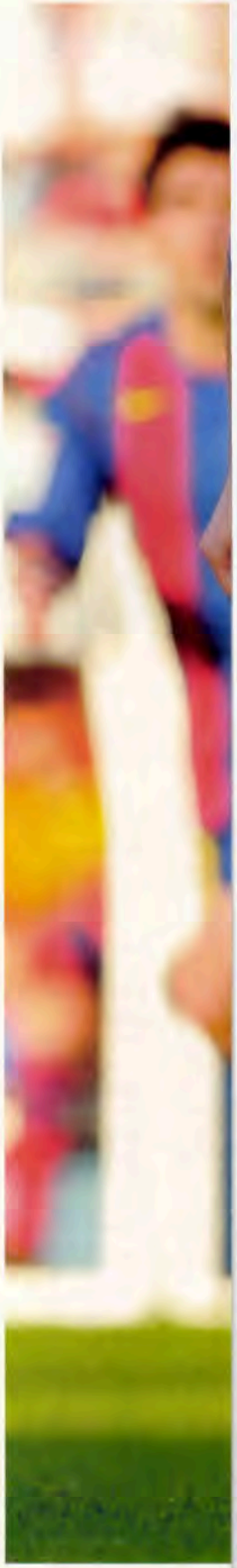
He was important in the signing of several players but they have all settled in now. I don't imagine Ronaldinho or Deco will feel they should move on just because Sandro has gone.

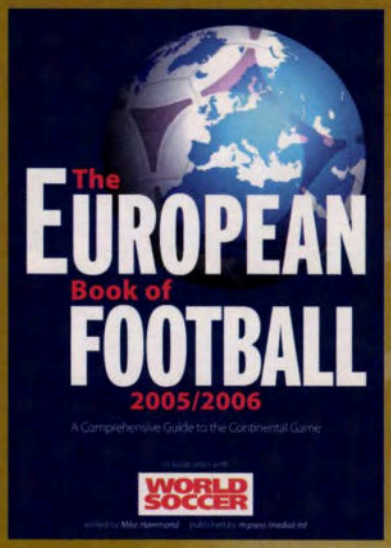
You have agreed a contract extension, taking you up to 2010.
Yes. I think it's important to know you are important to the club. But, to be honest, I'm always highly motivated because I like to win and because I am a Barca fan at heart. I don't know what sort of terms the other players are on and it doesn't matter to me. It's enough for me to know that the club has faith in me.

Did Chelsea make you an offer?
I knew only that there was contact between them and my agent, Ivan Corretja, but nothing like what was built up in the press. I did chat several times with Jose Mourinho but that was because I have a good relationship with him. I knew him from his time as assistant coach at Barcelona and then we met again at our Champions League ties last season as well as at the international between Spain and England in Madrid [last November]. But nothing was said to me about any offer.

Many fans do not appreciate your style. Does that upset you?
No, I understand it perfectly. The fans are attracted the most by players who score important goals or "leave their skin on the pitch", as we say. To value my game it's probably necessary to have played the game, to have an understanding of tactics and the needs of a team. I know I am not a headline-maker so I'm very happy for anyone to appreciate my game. Anyway, what matters most is that the dressing-room rates me.

You scored only three goals in the League last season. Can you do better this time?
I know goalscoring is not my strength. The coach tells me I should try to score more goals but my instinct is always to look for someone in a better position, rather than shoot myself. Maybe I need a bit more of the confidence around the goal area that Ronnie [Ronaldinho] has.





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Starting over...Patrick Vieira gets an early run-out for new club Juventus against Internazionale in the TIM Trophy in Trieste

Power, corruption and lies

It's been business as usual in Serie A this summer. Keir Radnedge reports

TO ALL INTENTS and purposes, business as usual: Juventus strengthened midfield by signing Patrick Vieira from Arsenal for £14million, and Milan bolstered their attack by investing £16m in Parma's national team striker Alberto Gilardino.

But behind the transfer glory headlines the game has been in financial meltdown. Also, one might say, business as usual.

Magically and mysteriously, cash crises and corruption do not touch the survival of Serie A. In any other country the majority of clubs would have been declared bankrupt years ago and administrative reconstruction would long have been under way.

But this is Italy and the cultural, social and political rules that bind *calcio* into the soul of the nation are different. Thus no one even thought to question the perversity of the *Bianconeri* and *Rossoneri* committing on just two players a sum that would have provided almost everyone else with some breathing space. Well, a little breathing space.

Juve's purchase of Vieira on a five-year deal was remarkably straightforward considering the tedious confusion of Real Madrid's previous annual pursuits of the France midfielder.

Fabio Capello – the Milan coach who wasted Vieira a decade ago – had been advised by the Juve board that it expected both more stability and more entertainment in the coming season. Plainly, he and Luciano Moggi, Juve's transfer Svengali, considered the key to be a solid midfield foundation; matching Vieira with Emerson would provide exactly that.

Gilardino interest

Milan's capture of the long-coveted Gilardino on a five-year contract worth £2.1million a season was nothing like as simple. Chief executive Adriano Galliani had initiated talks back in January, and Gilardino never made any secret of his mutual interest. He told Parma, who needed every last cent that his sale could raise: "It's Milan or nothing."

Nothing was never an option for Parma – it would mean no sale and a contract in freefall towards a zero return. For Milan's part, failure to negotiate a cut-price acquisition of Hernan Crespo from Chelsea, plus increasing concerns over the fitness – or lack of it – of Pippo Inzaghi, had made Gilardino's acquisition essential.

Terms were agreed between the clubs, as well as between Milan and player, and were ticked by Milan owner Silvio Berlusconi. Then, one last hitch: Enrico Bondi, administrator of the collapsed Parmalat empire, threw a spanner in the works. He queried whether Parma, its former subsidiary, was receiving the best price, given Gilardino's World Cup potential and the existence of only one suitor, Milan.

When a full weekend passed without anyone else coming in, Bondi accepted what he considered the best of a bad job and signed off Gilardino to last season's Champions League runners-up.

"He's my heir," said former Milan, Juve and Italy hero Paolo Rossi. "He is quick and determined, has a good eye for goal and international class. He did a great job for Parma. He'll do an even better job now he's at a big club."

In reality, "big clubs" are few and far between. Internazionale are secure but capital duo Roma and Lazio still struggle to make ends meet.

Roma were as much surprised as infuriated when the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Switzerland endorsed the transfer-market suspension imposed by their poaching a year ago of Philippe Mexes from Auxerre. What chief executive Rosella Sensi and new coach Luciano Spalletti could not fathom was coming up against a court that could not be twisted, appealed to or bypassed in the usual Italian way.

Perfect illustrations of the Italian approach to football justice were evidenced in both the summer's major match-fixing and licence controversies.

The match-fixing centred on the last game of last season in Serie B when Genoa beat Venezia 3-2 to return to Serie A for the first time in nine years. Two days later Venezia director Pino Pagliara was arrested outside the business HQ of Genoa owner Enrico Preziosi. Pagliara was carrying an attache case containing £150,000.

The clubs insisted this was payment for the transfer of Paraguayan defender Ruben Maldonado but the fraud squad and prosecutors were not convinced. The clubs were reported for alleged match-fixing, with the attempted fix of another Genoa game, against Ternana, thrown in for good measure.

Both clubs and eight officials, including Preziosi, were charged with "sporting fraud". Genoa risked being dropped back down to Serie B, while Venezia, already bankrupt, risked dropping two divisions. But the guilty verdict of the federation's disciplinary panel would be just the start of the penal process.

Protest marches

At least only three clubs were involved. By contrast, the licence renewal storm concerned 18 clubs in the top three divisions. In Serie A the financial regulator, COAVISOC, after its annual accounts review, declared two clubs – Messina and promoted Torino – beyond the pale. To them were added two clubs in Serie B (Perugia and Salernitana) and 14 in Serie C. Messina and Torino fans staged protest marches, while just-relegated Bologna and Treviso, beaten in the promotion play-offs by Torino, prepared, half-disbelieving, for life in Serie A.

An added complication was the fact that Venezia had also been declared bankrupt.

The laws in Italy were changed after Fiorentina's bankruptcy three years ago. In that case a new club had been created down in the basement of the League who had to win their way back to the top flight (with a little help from their friends). Now, the so-called "Petrucci law" means that if a club are declared bankrupt, their title and status revert to the federation, which can assign ownership – albeit one division down – to a new consortium.

Superficially, a never-ending appeals system involving sports commissions and civil courts, both regional and national, means there is no prospect of corruption, licence and bankruptcy issues being resolved in time for Serie A's return on August 28.

However, this is Italy and *calcio's* annual ritual dance. In the last days and hours before the big kick-off, the establishment, right up to Prime Minister Berlusconi, will scramble their way to yet another messy compromise.

THE BIG DEALS

All clear…Adrian Mutu (left)

Juventus

The champions have splashed out on Patrick Vieira, Niko Kovac (Bayern Munich) and Lazio's Giuliano Giannichedda, while Under-21 star Giorgio Chiellini is back from loan at Fiorentina. Romanian striker Adrian Mutu can play after his worldwide ban for drugs use.

Milan

Milan conducted the most drawn-out deal of the summer, eventually paying Parma £16m for striker Alberto Gilardino. Also signed were Christian Vieri (Inter), Czech wide man Marek Jankulovski (Udinese), Swiss midfielder Johann Vogel (PSV) and Greek keeper Dimitrios Eleftheropoulos (Messina).

Internazionale

Argentinian midfielder Santiago Solari (Real Madrid) joins compatriot Juan Sebastian Veron, who turned his loan from Chelsea permanent, Chilean midfielder David Pizarro (Udinese) and Cameroon defender Pierre Wome (Bologna).

Striking buy…Gilardino

Same place, different shirt…Vieri has swapped Inter for Milan

Udinese

The surprise Champions League qualifiers signed Teixeira Juarez (Bologna), Christian Obodo (Perugia) and Cesare Natali (Atalanta).

Lazio

Little action so far, but Albania striker Igli Tare arrived from Bologna.

Roma

Samuel Kuffour (Bayern) and Shabani Nonda (Monaco) were signed before a worldwide transfer ban was imposed, but FIFA has yet to ratify the deals.

Fiorentina

One of the biggest spenders, bringing in Stefano Fiore (Valencia), Giuseppe Pancaro (Milan), Sebastien Frey (Parma), Cristian Brocchi (Milan) and Alessandro Gamberini (Bologna).

Others

UEFA Cup qualifiers Palermo signed Nigerian starlet Stephen Makinwa (Atalanta).

Lying in wait...if Hernan Crespo can find the goalscoring form he showed in Milan, Chelsea may not need to go out and buy a new striker

Story of the Blues

Chelsea are in a league of their own, says Gavin Hamilton

IT IS OFTEN SAID that the Premier League contains a number of mini-leagues. To the categories of Champions League contenders, UEFA Cup chasers, mid-table meanderers and relegation scrappers, we should perhaps add a fifth sub-division – Chelsea.

The defending champions go into the 2005-06 campaign in a league of their own. No other team can now match the squad that has been assembled with Roman Abramovich's astonishing wealth. Nor can any English club hope to compete with Chelsea in the domestic transfer market in the near future.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger claimed that other clubs were waiting for Chelsea to complete their transfer business. "We are in a market where you let Chelsea make decisions and then come in after," he said. "There is a price for Chelsea and a price for everybody else and that is why we have to wait until they decide." Wenger was understandably frustrated at Arsenal's inability to join a bidding war for Manchester City's Shaun Wright-Phillips, whose departure for Chelsea in a £21million deal was never in doubt once the interest from Stamford Bridge in the England winger had become public.

The core of the Chelsea side that cruised to last season's Premier League title remains in place, but has been augmented by Wright-Phillips and Spain left-back Asier Del Horno, while Argentina striker Hernan Crespo is back after a year's loan at Milan.

If there is a chink in Chelsea's armour, it has been their failure to lure a big-name striker from Serie A or La Liga. Crespo has returned because, as Jose Mourinho admitted, perhaps unwittingly, "we could not get a better player than him".

If Crespo can settle in London and display the goalscoring form that he has always shown in Italy, then Mourinho will have two outstanding options in each position. Last season, he played his first-choice side whenever possible. For this campaign, he has hinted he may dabble in a little tinkering.

Europe distraction

The greatest hope for Chelsea's domestic rivals is that Mourinho becomes distracted by a successful campaign in Europe. Rarely in the history of the modern-day European Cup has a team combined European and domestic title success. Milan, Chelsea and Barcelona – last season's Champions League favourites – all failed to deliver on both fronts.

But even if Chelsea slip up, is there anyone capable of capitalising?

The sale of Patrick Vieira to Juventus has left Wenger with the biggest challenge of his nine years at Highbury. The form and fitness of Gilberto Silva will assume greater importance in Vieira's absence,

FIVE TO WATCH

1 Jared Borgetti
(Bolton)
The first Mexican to play in England will need time to settle, but his heading ability, as well as his goalscoring record for club and country, suggests Bolton may be on to something.

2 Peter Crouch
(Liverpool)
The giant striker does not suit Liverpool's traditional style of play and is not short of critics, but he will bring height and muscle to games in which they have struggled in the past.

3 Alexander Hleb
(Arsenal)
The Belorussian international did not come cheap (£7m rising to £10m) but his pace and flair should blend well with Arsenal's high-tempo game.

4 Roy Keane
(Manchester United)
Starting his last season at Old Trafford, probably, amid claims of a bust-up with Alex Ferguson. The manager's ability to find a long-term successor to the inspirational Irishman could well determine his own future.

5 Shaun Wright-Phillips
(Chelsea)
The biggest signing of the summer so far will add further pace to Chelsea's flanks. But how will he cope with the transition from Manchester City wonderkid to Chelsea squad member?

and if Arsenal can recover the "invincible" form of 2003-04, they could challenge. The downside is that the swashbuckling style that so overwhelmed lesser Premier League teams has failed to set Europe alight in the Champions League.

Manchester United have spent wisely, finally signing a keeper – vastly experienced Dutchman Edwin Van der Sar – who can break the post-Schmeichel hoodoo. Yet many questions remain unanswered about Alex Ferguson's future in the Malcolm Glazer era.

The dark horses, yet again, could be Liverpool. After the astonishing European Cup victory in Istanbul, manager Rafael Benitez has rung the changes. He has taken a huge gamble on forward Peter Crouch, but after suffering terribly with injuries last season, Liverpool are due a slice of good fortune.

Problem solved? ...Van der Sar

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ENGLAND team by team

Arsenal
Manager: Arsene Wenger
Key arrivals: Hleb (Stuttgart)
Key departures: Aliadiere (Celtic, loan), Edu (Valencia), Taylor (Aston Villa), Vieira (Juventus)
Prediction: The sale of Vieira leaves a huge hole in Arsenal's midfield that none of the existing squad can fill. But never underestimate the ability of Wenger to plug the gaps. However, the squad still looks a bit light to enjoy European success.

Villa new boy...Phillips

Aston Villa
Manager: David O'Leary
Key arrivals: Berger (Portsmouth), Hughes (Newcastle), Phillips (Southampton), Taylor (Arsenal)
Key departures: Hitzlsperger (Stuttgart), Moore (QPR), Vassell (Man City)
Prediction: Continuing uncertainty over the club's ownership may unsettle attempts to re-establish Villa as a top-eight side. But O'Leary does have the knack of getting the most out of the club's youngsters.

Birmingham
Manager: Steve Bruce
Key arrivals: Forssell (Chelsea, permanent from loan), Nafti (Santander), Pandiani (Deportivo La Coruna, permanent from loan)
Key departures: Carter (West Brom)
Prediction: More consolidation in prospect, though uninspiring signings raise the possibility of being drawn into a relegation fight.

Blackburn
Manager: Mark Hughes
Key arrivals: Bellamy (Newcastle), Kuqi (Ipswich)
Key departures: Bothroyd (Perugia), Johansson (released), Short (Sheffield Utd), Stead (Sunderland)
Prediction: Hughes has gambled by signing Craig Bellamy, who will do little to dispel Blackburn's image as rough-and-ready troublemakers.

Bolton
Manager: Sam Allardyce
Key arrivals: Borgetti (Pachuca), Diouf (Liverpool, permanent from loan).
Key departures: Candela (Udinese), Hierro (retired)
Prediction: A first European campaign beckons, with all its attractions and pitfalls. May struggle to repeat last season's heroics.

Charlton
Manager: Alan Curbishley
Key arrivals: Ambrose (Newcastle), Bent (Ipswich), Smertin (Chelsea, loan), Sorondo (Internazionale, loan)
Key departures: Fish (released), Konchesky (West Ham)
Prediction: Curbishley lost some of his lustre last season, but some useful summer signings should see Charlton back up in mid-table.

Chelsea
Manager: Jose Mourinho
Key arrivals: Crespo (Milan, loan return), Del Horno (Athletic Bilbao), Diarra (Le Havre), Wright-Phillips (Man City)
Key departures: Kezman (Atletico Madrid), Parker (Newcastle), Smertin (Charlton, loan)
Prediction: The team to beat, on and off the pitch. Mourinho continues to delight and infuriate, while Roman Abramovich's relations with Russia remain intriguing.

Everton
Manager: David Moyes
Key arrivals: Arteta (Sociedad, permanent from loan), Davies (Tottenham), Kroldrup (Udinese)
Key departures: Stubbs (released), Watson (West Brom)
Prediction: Defied the odds last season by finishing fourth after the sales of Wayne Rooney and Thomas Gravesen. Moyes has been given money to spend this summer, but he missed out on several top targets (Scott Parker, Emre Belozoglu, Craig Bellamy) and the signings he has made do not suggest Everton can repeat their success of last season.

Chelsea to Charlton...Smertin

Fulham
Manager: Chris Coleman
Key arrivals: Helguson (Watford), Jensen (Dortmund)
Key departures: Cole (Man City), Van der Sar (Man Utd)
Prediction: The warning signs are there. Coleman came under fire last season for uninspired tactics. Relegation struggle likely.

Liverpool
Manager: Rafael Benitez
Key arrivals: Crouch (Southampton), Gonzalez (Albacete), Reina (Villarreal), Sissoko (Valencia), Zenden (Middlesbrough)
Key departures: Biscan (Panathinaikos), Cheyrou (Bordeaux), Diarra (Lens), Kirkland (West Brom, loan), Pellegrino (Alaves), Smicer (Bordeaux), Vignal (Portsmouth, loan)
Prediction: No time for basking in the glory of Istanbul, but at least they will hit the ground running in the Premier League after the Champions League qualifiers. Liverpool must improve their away form to challenge for domestic honours. The signing of Peter Crouch is an expensive gamble

Manchester City
Manager: Stuart Pearce
Key arrivals: Cole (Fulham), Musampa (Atletico Madrid, permanent from loan), Vassell (Aston Villa)
Key departures: Bosvelt (Heerenveen), Macken (Crystal Palace), McManaman (released), Wright-Phillips (Chelsea)
Prediction: The sale of Shaun Wright-Phillips was inevitable given the size of the offer and scale of City's debts. Pearce worked wonders last season following Kevin Keegan's abrupt exit, but does he have the tactical and transfer acumen to match his motivating powers?

Manchester United
Manager: Sir Alex Ferguson
Key arrivals: Park (PSV), Van der Sar (Fulham)
Key departures: Carroll (West Ham), Ricardo (Osasuna)
Prediction: A crucial season, both on and off the pitch. How much time will Ferguson be given by the Glazers to revive the ageing squad? The goalkeeping situation has been sorted by Edwin Van der Sar's arrival, but there are still questions about the quality of the squad in Europe.

Middlesbrough
Manager: Steve McClaren
Key arrivals: Aiyegbeni (Portsmouth), Pogatetz (Leverkusen)
Key departures: Zenden (Liverpool)
Prediction: Boro continue to gain ground under McClaren, but will probably still fall short of Champions League contention.

Newcastle
Manager: Graeme Souness
Key arrivals: Emre (Internazionale), Parker (Chelsea)
Key departures: Ambrose (Charlton), Bellamy (Blackburn), Hughes (Aston Villa), Kluivert (Valencia), O'Brien (Portsmouth), Robert (Portsmouth)
Prediction: Scott Parker and Emre Belozoglu are quality signings but doubts remain about whether Souness can survive in the long-term. With takeover bids rumoured, it should be an eventful season.

Portsmouth
Manager: Alain Perrin
Key arrivals: O'Brien (Newcastle), Robert (Newcastle), Viafara (Once Caldas), Vignal (Liverpool, loan), Westerveld (Mallorca)
Key departures: Aiyegbeni (Middlesbrough), Berger (Aston Villa), Stone (Leeds)
Prediction: Uninspiring summer buys suggest they face a relegation battle.

Sunderland
Manager: Mick McCarthy
Key arrivals: Davis (Ipswich), Stead (Blackburn)
Key departures: Stewart (Bristol City)
Prediction: McCarthy may well need to add more quality to avoid a relegation scrap.

Tottenham
Manager: Martin Jol
Key arrivals: Huddlestone (Derby), Routledge (Crystal Palace), Stalteri (Werder Bremen), Tainio (Auxerre)
Key departures: Atouba (Hamburg), Davies (Everton), Ricketts (Wolves)
Prediction: Spurs' pride was battered by technical director Frank Arnesen's defection to Chelsea. But Wayne Routledge should add zip to midfield and they should challenge for Europe.

West Brom
Manager: Bryan Robson
Key arrivals: Carter (Birmingham), Kirkland (Liverpool, loan), Watson (Everton)
Key departures: Hulse (Leeds), Richardson (Man Utd, loan return)
Prediction: Had a miraculous escape last term, but Kieran Richardson's departure suggests another dogfight.

West Ham
Manager: Alan Pardew
Key arrivals: Benayoun (Santander), Carroll (Man Utd), Collins (Cardiff), Gabbidon (Cardiff), Konchesky (Charlton)
Key departures: Hutchison (released), Rebrov (Kyiv Dynamo)
Prediction: Promoted Hammers have made interesting signings but will have to fight for every point.

Earning Spurs...Tainio

Wigan
Manager: Paul Jewell
Key arrivals: Chimbonda (Bastia), Henchoz (Celtic), Taylor (Tranmere)
Key departures: none
Prediction: The amazing rise from non-League to Premier League in 27 years may come to an abrupt end unless owner Dave Whelan's money can attract some quality signings.

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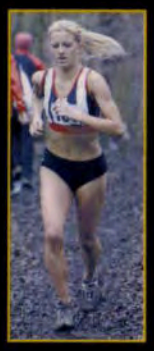

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Added strength...new Lyon signing John Carew powers past Park Jin-sub of South Korean side Songnam during a pre-season friendly tournament in Ulsan

Hungry for more?

Defending champions Lyon have the best squad, but have they got the appetite for another title, asks Howard Johnson

IT'S NO SURPRISE, but Olympique Lyonnais, champions for the past four seasons, will be the team to beat in the race for the 2005-06 title – with or without Michael Essien. OL so completely dominated Ligue 1 last time out that even should they lose the midfielder, to Chelsea, their squad looks a cut above the opposition.

The big question mark hanging over the champions is whether they'll have the same appetite for the fight under coach Gerard Houllier, who took the reins from Paul Le Guen in the close season. Le Guen's is a big shadow under which Houllier will have to work, despite the fact that the side have been strengthened by the arrival of big Norwegian striker John Carew from Besiktas and talented playmaker Benoit Pedretti from Marseille.

The League title is the very least Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas will demand. That will create genuine pressure, and if Lyon show any signs of faltering there are a number of teams capable of taking up the challenge this season.

Much will be expected of Marseille after a disappointing campaign last term, when they finished only fifth. The club showed they are not prepared to put up with a repeat by bringing in Metz boss Jean Fernandez to replace Philippe Troussier and by making several new signings. Highly-rated Strasbourg striker Mamadou Niang, Sochaux midfielder Wilson Oruma and Galatasaray's French midfielder Franck Ribery have all been brought in, while there have been just two major departures – Pedretti and Eduardo Costa to Espanyol.

So Marseille look strong on paper, and while the southern glamour boys have often threatened to pose a challenge then faded from view in the past, they're promising it will be different this time.

Marseille's big rivals, Paris Saint-Germain, have been busy, too, looking to bring together a team that can banish the nightmare of their ninth-place finish last season. Coach Laurent Fournier has brought in Czech Republic defender David Rozehnal from Club Brugge to add a bit of muscle and French international midfielder Vikash Dhorasoo from Milan to give the side the penetration they so clearly lacked last season. But the capital club are unlikely to be able to put a really tight squeeze on Lyon.

Monaco threat

In fact, the team with the best chance of challenging the champions seem to be Monaco. They have stability, with coach Didier Deschamps entering his fifth season in charge, making him Ligue 1's longest-serving boss. Also, they have arguably made the most astute close-season

FIVE TO WATCH

1 Bonaventure Kalou
(PSG)
He was the hero of Auxerre's Cup Final win last season, scoring the last-minute winner, and great things are expected of the Ivorian striker now he is leading the line at PSG. He's athletic, powerful and has a great eye for goal.

2 Sabri Lamouchi
(Marseille)
"I wouldn't have gone anywhere but Marseille," says the ex-Auxerre and Monaco man, who came back to France from Inter this summer to stiffen Marseille's midfield. He may not be a glamour player, but he could well be the club's driving heart.

3 Camel Meriem
(Monaco)
As highly rated as any midfielder in France, and the 25-year-old's obvious delight at joining Monaco from Bordeaux suggests he'll be going all out to give his new side the powerful engine they'll need to challenge Lyon.

4 Olivier Kapo
(Monaco)
He didn't tear up any trees in his year at Juventus last term, but in 10 years at Auxerre before that Kapo cemented his reputation as a player who has the uncanny ability to make things happen on the pitch. Under the expert tutelage of Didier Deschamps he could really come into his own at Monaco – and he's still only 24!

5 Sebastien Mazure
(Saint-Etienne)
The striker scored an impressive 13 goals for Caen in Ligue 1 last season, and while it wasn't enough to stop his club from slipping out of the top flight, his performance was good enough to persuade Saint-Etienne to snap him up. *Les Verts'* attacking gameplan should really suit this instinctive poacher.

signings, including midfielders Gerard (from Barcelona) and Olivier Kapo (Juventus), and striker Toifilou Maoulida (Rennes). But it is the capture of Bordeaux midfielder Camel Meriem that will have excited Monaco fans the most.

Elsewhere, it's hard to see a barely-altered Lille squad performing the same heroics that landed them the runners-up spot last season. The departure of star man Christophe Landrin to PSG hardly helps their cause. And could Bordeaux, one of the aristocrats of the French game, be in for another unseemly struggle? Having avoided relegation by the skin of their teeth in 2004-05, the west coast outfit have lost influential players during the summer. This means Brazilian former PSG coach Ricardo – brought in to replace Michel Pavon – will have his work cut out, despite the arrivals of Liverpool old boys Vladimir Smicer and Bruno Cheyrou.

FRANCE team by team

Miracle man...Ajaccio's Courbis

Ajaccio
Coach: Roland Courbis
Key arrivals: Antonio Carlos (Fluminense), Danjou (Caen), Rocchi (PSG), Saifi (Istres), Ziani (Bastia)
Key departures: Bezzaz (Valenciennes), Connen (Grenoble), Demont (Lens), Ouadah (Metz)
Prediction: With Courbis still at the helm, Ajaccio can continue to perform miracles, but avoiding relegation will still be touch and go.

Auxerre
Coach: Jacques Santini
Key arrivals: Kaalabane (Etoile Sahel), Kahlenberg (Brondby)
Key departures: Gonzalez (Guingamp), Kalou (PSG), Tainio (Tottenham), Vandenbossche (Chateauroux)
Prediction: New coach Santini has promised there will be no revolution now Guy Roux has departed. So a steady campaign looks about the limit of Auxerre's ambitions, especially without striker Bonaventure Kalou.

Bordeaux
Coach: Ricardo
Key arrivals: Alonso (Huracan), Cheyrou (Liverpool), Fernandes Vasco (Olhanense), Perea (Atletico Nacional), Smicer (Liverpool)
Key departures: Caneira (Valencia), Deivid (Sporting Lisbon), Feindouno (Saint-Etienne), Kapsis (Olympiakos), Meriem (Monaco), Riera (Espanyol), Rool (Nice)
Prediction: Much depends on new coach Ricardo. If he gets things wrong, the club could struggle again.

Le Mans
Coach: Daniel Jeandupeux
Key arrivals: Basa (OFK Belgrade), Ekhosuehi (Esperance), Gormond (Moulins), Matsui (Kyoto Purple Sanga)
Key departures: Grondin (Valenciennes), Liabeuf (Brest)
Prediction: The promoted side lack the strength in depth and firepower to make a major impact. They'll be happy if they survive.

Lens
Coach: Francis Gillot
Key arrivals: Demont (Ajaccio), Diarra (Liverpool), Dindane (Anderlecht), Jemaa (Esperance)
Key departures: Fanni (Nice), Utaka (Rennes)
Prediction: A respectable seventh position kept everyone satisfied last season. But the new signings don't look too inspired, so another high finish would be a success.

Lille
Coach: Claude Puel
Key arrivals: Gygax (Zurich), Lichtsteiner (Grasshopper)
Key departures: Aubriot (Gueugnon), Brunel (Sochaux), Landrin (PSG), Raynier (Sete)
Prediction: Last season's second place was a great achievement, but the squad looks thin and the new signings not impressive enough to capitalise on progress made.

Lyon
Coach: Gerard Houllier
Key arrivals: Carew (Besiktas), Monsoreau (Sochaux), Pedretti (Marseille)
Key departures: Bergougnoux (Toulouse), Puydebois (Strasbourg)
Prediction: The boys to beat. The biggest criticism of Lyon last season was that they could look a little lightweight up front. The arrival of John Carew should change all that.

Marseille
Coach: Jean Fernandez
Key arrivals: Lamouchi (Inter, loan), Lucas Segovia (Rayo Vallecano), Mendoza (Metalurh Donetsk, loan), Niang (Strasbourg), Oruma (Sochaux), Ribery (Galatasaray)
Key departures: Costa (Espanyol), Ecker (Guingamp), Hemdani (Rangers), Johansen (Strasbourg), Pedretti (Lyon), Racon (Guingamp), Vachousek (Austria Wien)
Prediction: It's time Marseille delivered and they now have the means to do it. If the blend works, they'll be contenders.

Metz
Coach: Joel Muller
Key arrivals: Ahn (Yokohama F Marinos), Ouadah (Ajaccio), Paisley (Sochaux)
Key departures: Avezac (Dijon), Diakite (Setubal), Dinet (Brest), Signorino (Nantes)
Prediction: Metz lost coach Jean Fernandez to Marseille, which won't help, but they should be solid enough under new coach Muller not to spend too much of the season looking nervously over their shoulder.

Title defence...Houllier of Lyon

Monaco
Coach: Didier Deschamps
Key arrivals: Gerard (Barcelona), Kapo (Juventus, loan), Meriem (Bordeaux), Maoulida (Rennes), Sorlin (Rennes), Warmuz (Dortmund)
Key departures: Farnerud (Strasbourg), Grauss (Clermont), Juan (Ipswich, loan), Lacombe (Setubal), Nonda (Roma)
Prediction: Serious contenders. Monaco could easily push Lyon all the way to the wire.

Nancy
Coach: Pablo Correa
Key arrivals: Adailton (Criciuma), Andre Luiz Silva (Atletico Mineiro), Keita (Iraklis), Marseille (Reims), Puygrenier (Rennes), Sarkissian (River Plate, Uru)
Key departures: Dufresne (Valenciennes), Fayolle (Amiens)
Prediction: The Ligue 2 champions have a good squad, which should mean they survive fairly comfortably.

Nantes
Coach: Serge Le Dizet
Key arrivals: Heurtebis (Brest), Mhadhebi (Esperance), Signorino (Metz)
Key departures: Ahamada (Belenenses), Bagayoko (Nice, loan), Bratu (Dinamo Bucharest, loan), Caceres (Atletico Mineiro, loan)
Prediction: Avoided the drop by one point last season and have done little in the close season to suggest any improvement.

Nice
Coach: Gerard Buscher
Key arrivals: Bagayoko (Nantes, loan), Boucansaud (Gueugnon), Fanni (Lens), Kone (Lorient), Rool (Bordeaux), Tchato (Kaiserslautern)
Key departures: Agali (Kayseri Erciyesspor), Ba (Troyes)
Prediction: Mid-table obscurity again beckons, but the arrival of midfielder Cyril Rool may give them a boost.

Paris Saint-Germain
Coach: Laurent Fournier
Key arrivals: Bueno (Penarol), Dhorasoo (Milan), Kalou (Auxerre), Landrin (Lille), Rodriguez (Penarol), Rozehnal (Club Brugge)
Key departures: Benachour (Guimaraes), Kipre (Angers), Pierre-Fanfan (Rangers), Rocchi (Ajaccio)
Prediction: They'll be better than last season, but they couldn't really be any worse. PSG have bought some decent players, but they've done that before and still failed to impress.

Rennes
Coach: Laszlo Boloni
Key arrivals: Hadji (Nancy), Rochat (Young Boys), Utaka (Lens)
Key departures: Dudu (CSKA Moscow), Le Lan (Guingamp), Maoulida (Monaco), Piquionne (Saint-Etienne), Puygrenier (Nancy), Sorlin (Monaco)
Prediction: Rennes lost striker Toifilou Maoulida, a big blow, but while they're not strong enough to be title challengers, they are a pretty useful side with good new additions.

Saint-Etienne
Coach: Elie Baup
Key arrivals: Feindouno (Bordeaux), Mazure (Caen), Perquis (Troyes), Piquionne (Rennes), Viviani (Montpellier), Yahia (Southampton)
Key departures: Carteron (Cannes), Compan (Caen), Hernandez (Amiens)
Prediction: Frederic Piquionne and Sebastien Mazure are exciting signings, and the team could well improve on last term's sixth position.

Sochaux
Coach: Guy Lacombe
Key arrivals: Afolabi (Austria Wien), Brunel (Lille), Bulher (Aarau)
Key departures: Gnanhouan (Montpellier), Mathieu (Toulouse), Monsoreau (Lyon), Oruma (Marseille), Paisley (Metz), Santos (Toulouse)
Prediction: They haven't replaced sold players adequately; a tough season looms.

Strasbourg
Coach: Jacky Dugueperoux
Key arrivals: Boka (Beveren), Diane (Reims), Farnerud (Monaco), Hosni (Ismaili), Johansen (Marseille), Puydebois (Lyon)
Key departures: Abdessadki (Toulouse), Momha (Laval), Niang (Marseille)
Prediction: They won't be as potent without Mamadou Niang, but a top-half finish is realistic.

Toulouse
Coach: Eric Mombaerts
Key arrivals: Abdessadki (Strasbourg), Bergougnoux (Lyon), Mansare (Montpellier), Mathieu (Sochaux), Santos (Sochaux)
Key departures: Clement (Montpellier), Eduardo (Botafogo), Faure (Istres), Suarez (Guingamp)
Prediction: Another season of underachievement appears to beckon.

Troyes
Coach: Jean-Marc Furtan
Key arrivals: Ba (Nice), Danic (Grenoble), Dujeux (Le Havre), Grax (Monaco, loan), Guillaume (Guingamp), Yamissi (Nimes)
Key departures: Grandel (Utrecht), Perquis (Saint-Etienne)
Prediction: The third promoted outfit have made some smart signings, but survival may be a close-run thing.

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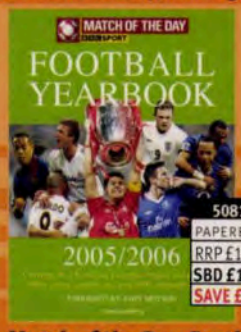

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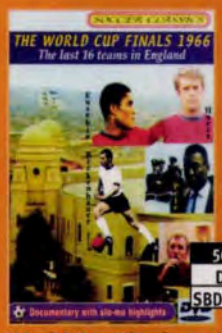

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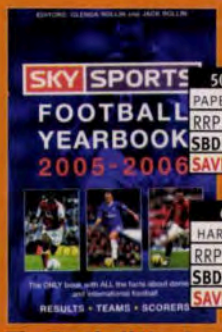

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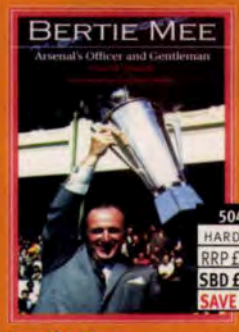

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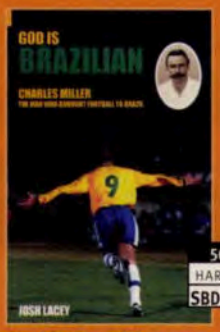

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Closer to home...former Italy boss Giovanni Trapattoni, who took Benfica to the Portuguese title last season, is installed as Stuttgart's new coach

Looks familiar

Trap's back and, as usual, Bayern start as favourites. Nick Bidwell reports

IN AN EVER-CHANGING football world, the Bundesliga can be a refreshingly stable place to be. Grounds still have terracing, sleeveless denim jackets and scarves tied around the wrists remain as popular with fans as they were in the 1970s, the words *zweikampf* (challenge) and *laufstark* (hard-runner) continue to be among the most-used words in the media's vocabulary, and, as ever, Bayern Munich start each season as favourites.

Bayern, the reigning Bundesliga champions, will certainly be the team to beat over the next nine months. No other team in the country have more internationals in their ranks, and it is hard to see a squad coached by that notoriously hard taskmaster Felix Magath suffering any sort of post-title hangover. Magath has put his big-name charges through the wringer during pre-season training in the Bavarian mountains and the old West German capital Bonn, and any player foolish enough to economise on effort on the pitch will surely find himself dispatched to the stands.

There are, however, a few crumbs of comfort for all those clubs hoping to prevent Bayern celebrating the opening of their new stadium, the Allianz Arena, with another title. Returned to sender after three good seasons on loan at Stuttgart, left-back Philipp Lahm will not be available to Bayern until the New Year after tearing knee ligaments in May. Meanwhile, the departure of Robert Kovac, Thomas Linke and Sammy Kuffour leaves the champions short of central defensive back-up should the first-choice pairing of new signing Valerien Ismael (from Werder Bremen) and Lucio be injured.

Of all the pretenders to Bayern's throne, Werder and last season's runners-up Schalke seem the best equipped to go the distance. A Werder midfield featuring versatile new signing Torsten Frings, who returns to the northern club after stints with Dortmund and Bayern, the dynamic Tim Borowski and stylish French creator Johan Micoud rates among the best in the land.

Gamble on Kuranyi

Schalke will be even more of a threat up front now they have bought *Nationalmannschaft* striker Kevin Kuranyi from Stuttgart. However, the Gelsenkirchen club definitely took a financial gamble when forking out some £14million on Kuranyi (£5m for the fee, plus £9m in salary over five years), especially since they are already in debt to the tune of £80m. As former Leeds chairman Peter Ridsdale learnt to his cost, budgeting for regular Champions League monies can be a most risky business.

FIVE TO WATCH

1 Marcelinho
(Hertha Berlin)
No one was sure during the Brazilian midfield maestro's first three years at Hertha whether he would play the part of world-beater or passenger. That all changed last season when he scored 15 goals and made another 13.

2 Bastian Schweinsteiger
(Bayern Munich)
The left-sided midfielder is an automatic choice for Germany but, oddly, not for Bayern. Even so, he should go from Bavarian bit-part to headliner this season.

3 Jon Dahl Tomasson
(Stuttgart)
Tired of life on the bench at Milan, the Danish attacker toyed with the idea of going to Benfica, Marseille and Lyon before signing a four-year contract with Stuttgart. He now faces the tough task of replacing Schalke-bound Kevin Kuranyi.

4 Roman Weidenfeller
(Borussia Dortmund)
The immensely self-confident 26-year-old was probably the best keeper in the Bundesliga last season. He could be the long-term successor to Oliver Kahn in the national team, though he has to get past Jens Lehmann and Timo Hildebrand first.

5 Rafael Van der Vaart
(Hamburg)
After falling out of love with Ajax, the gifted Dutch attacking midfielder, once linked with Real Madrid and Barcelona, sold everyone a dummy by heading for mid-table Hamburg. Johan Cruyff thinks he has made a big mistake. We shall see.

The story of the summer, though, was former Italy, Juventus, Internazionale and Bayern coach Giovanni Trapattoni pitching up at Stuttgart to replace the sacked Matthias Sammer. The arrival of 66-year-old "Trap", who last season led Benfica to the Portuguese title, gave some in the German media the chance to air the view that he was a dinosaur, an excessively defensive tactician.

Stuttgart president Erwin Staudt was having none of it, however, saying: "We've recruited a super coach, a legendary name. He's won so much in the game and is a professional from top to toe."

With German fans buoyed by the improved performances of their national team at the Confederations Cup, World Cup fever is beginning to take hold and the excitement is spilling into the Bundesliga, prompting record levels of season ticket sales for the 18 top-flight clubs.

Bayern first-choice...Lucio

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GERMANY team by team

Arminia Bielefeld

Coach: Thomas Von Heesen
Key arrivals: Korzynietz (Gladbach), Krupnikovic (Hannover), Rau (Bayern), Zuma (FC Copenhagen)
Key departures: Buckley (Dortmund), Langkamp (Wolfsburg), Lense (Nurnberg), Owomoyela (Werder), Skela (Kaiserslautern)
Prediction: Virtually all their best players have moved on this summer and they will especially miss the goals of South African Delron Buckley. Hard times ahead for Von Heesen, who has swapped his technical director role for that of head coach.

Vital...Leverkusen's Berbatov

Bayer Leverkusen

Coach: Klaus Augenthaler
Key arrivals: Athirson (Cruzeiro), Barnetta (Hannover), Madouni (Dortmund), Rolfes (Aachen), Tadic (Osijek)
Key departures: Bierofka (Stuttgart)
Prediction: The Rhinelanders will have to be far more consistent if they want to improve on last season's sixth-place finish. Vital to their hopes will be strikers Dimitar Berbatov and Andrii Voronin.

Bayern Munich

Coach: Felix Magath
Key arrivals: Ismael (Werder), Karimi (Al Ahly), Lahm (Stuttgart)
Key departures: Frings (Werder), Hashemian (Hannover), Kovac (Juventus), Kuffour (Roma), Linke (Salzburg), Rau (Bielefeld), Zickler (Salzburg)
Prediction: Bayern have all they need to mount a title defence: the strongest squad, the work ethic of coach Magath, and ability all over the pitch – notably Michael Ballack in midfield, Lucio in defence and Roy Makaay up front.

Borussia Dortmund

Coach: Bert Van Marwijk
Key arrivals: Buckley (Bielefeld), Degen (Basle)
Key departures: Addo (Mainz), Demel (Hamburg), Evanilson (Atletico Mineiro), Ewerthon (Zaragoza), Warmuz (Monaco)
Prediction: Their £70m-plus debts meant another fire sale this summer, but there is still enough class at the Westfalenstadion for a top-six finish.

Borussia Monchengladbach

Coach: Horst Koppel
Key arrivals: Bogelund (PSV), Helveg (Norwich), Oude Kamphuis (Schalke)
Key departures: Hausweiler (Duisburg), Korzynietz (Bielefeld), Van Kerckhoven (Westerlo)
Prediction: After two spells as caretaker boss at Gladbach, the experienced Koppel has been given the job on a permanent basis. The players have responded well to his cheerful management style, meaning the relegation zone should be avoided.

Duisburg

Coach: Norbert Meier
Key arrivals: Hausweiler (Gladbach), Lavric (Dresden), Michalke (Aachen), Tjikuzu (Rostock), Willi (Freiburg)
Key departures: Drsek (Bochum), Wehlage (Essen)
Prediction: Coach Meier, a member of the victorious Germany squad at Italia 90 and a Bundesliga winner with Werder Bremen, would arguably consider survival with promoted Duisburg to be an even more satisfying experience. Expect his side to be workmanlike but uninspiring.

Eintracht Frankfurt

Coach: Friedhelm Funkel
Key arrivals: Copado (Unterhaching), Huggel (Basle), Preuss (Bochum), Rehmer (Hertha), Spycher (Grasshopper)
Key departures: Hoffmann (1860 Munich)
Prediction: Eintracht are back, two years after relegation, but while coach Funkel knows how to plot a promotion campaign (he has done it five times with four clubs) he may struggle to keep this team of journeymen afloat.

Hamburg

Coach: Thomas Doll
Key arrivals: Atouba (Tottenham), Demel (Dortmund), Van der Vaart (Ajax), Ziebig (Dresden)
Key departures: Donde (Feyenoord), Moreira (Standard Liege), Schlicke (Koln)
Prediction: The signing of Ajax attacking midfielder Rafael Van der Vaart was a clear sign of the Hamburg board's ambition. The Dutchman's creativity and the finishing of fit-again striker Benny Lauth could push them into the higher plains of the League.

Hannover

Coach: Ewald Lienen
Key arrivals: Balitsch (Mainz), Brdaric (Wolfsburg), Delura (Schalke), Hashemian (Bayern), Idrissou (Caen), Ricardo Sousa (De Graafschap), Yankov (Slavia Sofia)
Key departures: Barnetta (Leverkusen), Krupnikovic (Bielefeld), Leandro (Grasshopper), Paunovic (Getafe)
Prediction: General manager Ilja Kaenzig has done well in the transfer market, bringing in two of Germany's best young midfielders, Michael Delura and Hanno Balitsch, and the potentially irresistible strikeforce of Thomas Brdaric and Vahid Hashemian.

Hertha Berlin

Coach: Falko Gotz
Key arrivals: Cairo (Freiburg), Okoronkwo (Gabros International), Stuhr-Ellegaard (Manchester City)
Key departures: Rehmer (Eintracht), Reina (Bielefeld)
Prediction: Hertha's midfield star Marcelinho is openly talking of winning the League. But sadly his judgement does not match his ability. The squad lack strength in depth and they desperately need a proven striker. Top six at best.

Kaiserslautern

Coach: Michael Henke
Key arrivals: Skela (Bielefeld)
Key departures: Grammozis (Koln), Wiese (Werder)
Prediction: Lautern have punched below their weight for three seasons and another jittery campaign could be on the cards. New coach Henke is flying solo for the first time after 12 years as an assistant to Ottmar Hitzfeld at Dortmund and Bayern.

Koln

Coach: Uwe Rapolder
Key arrivals: Grammozis (Kaiserslautern), Lurling (NAC Breda), Madsen (Bochum), Matip (Bochum), Schlicke (Hamburg), Szabics (Stuttgart)
Key departures: Federico (Karlsruhe)
Prediction: The Second Division champions will be happy just to survive, but with young Lukas Podolski leading the line, that should be achieved without any complications.

Mainz

Coach: Jurgen Klopp
Key arrivals: Addo (Dortmund), Pekovic (Trier), Ruman (Greuther Furth)

Sharp...Kuranyi, now at Schalke

Key departures: Balitsch (Hannover)
Prediction: Bundesliga virgins last season, they took many big-name opponents unawares with their high-energy approach. They may find life harder without the element of surprise, but the squad togetherness and coach Klopp's organisational nous ought to see them through.

Nurnberg

Coach: Wolfgang Wolf
Key arrivals: Mnari (Esperance), Polak (Liberec), Saenko (Karlsruhe)
Key departures: Langerbein (Essen)
Prediction: Their ability to stay afloat will hinge on whether they can keep midfielder Marek Mintal on board. The Slovak was League top scorer last term, almost single-handedly saving Nurnberg from relegation.

Schalke

Coach: Ralf Rangnick
Key arrivals: Bajramovic (Freiburg), Ernst (Werder), Kuranyi (Stuttgart)
Key departures: Delura (Hannover), Oude Kamphuis (Gladbach)
Prediction: Potentially Bayern's closest rivals. They boast a mean back line and a creative, intelligent midfield, while the arrival of Kevin Kuranyi should make them even sharper up front.

Stuttgart

Coach: Giovanni Trapattoni
Key arrivals: Bierofka (Leverkusen), Hitzlsperger (Aston Villa), Magnin (Werder), Tomasson (Milan)
Key departures: Hleb (Arsenal), Kuranyi (Schalke), Lahm (Bayern), Vranjes (Werder), Yakin (Young Boys)
Prediction: "Trap" has not gone for the soft option at Stuttgart. Their best players (Alexander Hleb and Kevin Kuranyi) have left and the atmosphere in the dressing-room is not particularly one of brotherly love.

Werder Bremen

Coach: Thomas Schaaf
Key arrivals: Andreasen (AGF Aarhus), Frings (Bayern), Owomoyela (Bielefeld), Van Damme (Southampton), Vranjes (Stuttgart), Wiese (Kaiserslautern)
Key departures: Ernst (Schalke), Ismael (Bayern), Magnin (Stuttgart), Nery (Corinthians), Stalteri (Tottenham)
Prediction: As usual, recruiting officer Klaus Allofs has worked wonders with limited funds, and the club look to have a stronger squad than last season. Champions League qualification is a realistic goal.

Wolfsburg

Coach: Holger Fach
Key arrivals: Hanke (Schalke), Langkamp (Bielefeld), Van der Heyden (Club Brugge)
Key departures: Biliskov (Duisburg), Brdaric (Hannover), Petrov (Atletico Madrid)
Prediction: The club have big dreams but not the cash to turn them into reality. Likely to be moored in mid-table, though the goals of new striker Mike Hanke may be some consolation.

Goal-getter...Wolfsburg's Hanke

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SIX OF THE BEST
NEW ARRIVALS IN ENGLAND

1 PARK Ji-sung

Selling talent, not just shirts

APART FROM SATISFYING the high standards of manager Sir Alex Ferguson and Manchester United's fans, Park Ji-sung has two tests to pass as he becomes the first South Korean to play in the Premiership.

The winger must prove wrong both Guus Hiddink, coach of former club PSV Eindhoven, who predicted Park would spend most of his time at Old Trafford on the bench, and also cynics who jest that his arrival is more about selling Red Devils' shirts in the Far East than scoring goals in the Premiership.

When the 24-year-old's work permit application was approved in early July he became the highest-paid Korean player of all time with a four-year contract worth more than £450,000 a year.

Ferguson believes that his latest, £4million purchase from PSV can prove equally adept in the Premiership as the previous ones – Jaap Stam and Ruud Van Nistelrooy – and provide healthy competition to 31-year-old Ryan Giggs for the left-wing berth. He says: "You have to look at Ryan's age. Park impressed me the most when he was playing on the left and then coming infield. We'll start with him there and see how it develops."

Park, like a number of his South Korean team-mates who reached the 2002 World Cup semi-finals, developed his talent across the waters in Japan, in his case with Kyoto Purple Sanga. He had planned to become a physical education teacher but gambled on his talent and was rewarded with a national team debut in 2000. A year later he helped Kyoto to the Second Division title.

Hiddink took over as Korea boss at the start of 2001. He wanted skilful, energetic players who would give their all in every game. Park, adept on both wings and even as an attacking full-back, ticked all the boxes.

He duly cemented a place in Korean football history with his 70th-minute winner against Portugal in the World Cup group stage in Incheon. Following his exploits, it was no surprise Park was one of two Koreans – Lee Young-pyo was the other – Hiddink took to PSV in December 2002.

Adjusting to the pace and power of European football as well as the Dutch lifestyle and language took Park longer than he expected. He says: "After the World Cup, we probably thought we could go anywhere, play anywhere, easily. But it was difficult."

Criticism from team-mate Mark Van Bommel and a knee injury did not help Park. He played only eight times during PSV's 2002-03 League title-winning season but then scored six times in 28 games when they finished runners-up in 2004, followed by seven in 28 last season. That was when United stepped in.

An irritated Hiddink questioned whether Park had not made the Premiership too soon, saying: "He will spend most of his time on the bench so it was not a wise decision for him to go. Park should have stayed with us for another year."

Other critics, of course, have suggested Park has been signed with half an eye on his marketing value. He prefers not to think so, saying: "I intend to show my value in terms of ability. I have not come to sell shirts."

Keir Radnedge

FACT FILE

Club Manchester United
Country South Korea
Born February 25, 1981, in Seoul
Previous clubs Kyoto Purple Sanga (Jap), PSV Eindhoven (Hol)
International debut April 2000, v Laos
Honours Dutch League 2003, 2005; Dutch Cup 2005

2 Jose Manuel REINA

Liverpool's new penalty king

JOSE "PEPE" REINA, Liverpool's £6million signing from Villarreal, has no doubt that Jerzy Dudek will prove a tough act to follow. The Pole may have frustrated fans during his time at Anfield but he was the hero of heroes in the Champions League Final in Istanbul, not least because of his penalty saves in the shoot-out.

But when it comes to saving penalties, Reina tops them all. In two seasons at Villarreal, he saved 11 out of 17 spot-kicks, and his art helped bring Villarreal victory over Atletico Madrid in one of last season's InterToto Cup finals.

"My technique is to study the opposition," says Reina, "and then try to intimidate the penalty taker – within the laws, of course."

The 22-year-old is not short of admirers. Obviously, Liverpool boss Rafa Benitez is one. So is Spain coach Luis Aragones; he summoned the 22-year-old into his squad for the first time for the June World Cup qualifiers against Lithuania and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Admirer No 3, and most important, is the man who taught Reina all he knows – his father.

Miguel Reina won Spain's top goalkeeping award, the Trofeo Zamora, during his years with Barcelona and Atletico Madrid. He says his son showed the first signs of following in his footsteps from the age of six.

"He wanted to be an outside-right," says Reina senior. "But I told him a goalkeeper wouldn't get kicked as much, so that convinced him. I could tell by the time he was eight he was going to be better than me.

"When I was still at Atletico I went to Barcelona and asked [Johan] Cruyff and [his assistant Charly] Rexach to give him a trial. After a while Rexach called me to say they had a place for him at the academy."

After a spell in the youth ranks, Reina was promoted to the senior Barcelona squad in 2000 and made his debut at 18 against Celta Vigo. But he failed to make the breakthrough he and his father had hoped for, so in 2002 he jumped at the chance of going on loan to Villarreal.

Reina quickly became a fans' favourite at El Madrigal as Villarreal's "Yellow Submarine" forged up La Liga and reached the last 32 of the UEFA Cup. A permanent deal was agreed last summer and he showed his worth by conceding only 10 League goals at home during the entire season as the club finished third.

By now he was attracting a string of scouts to every game. Arsenal and Manchester United had also been eyeing up Reina, but only Benitez was happy to meet Villarreal's valuation. Reina says: "I know there were other offers my agent was looking at...But after speaking to Xabi Alonso and the other Spanish boys at Anfield, I couldn't wait to get there."

Reina has previous Anfield experience, having played there for Barcelona during his side's 2001 UEFA Cup semi-final defeat. He says: "I love the atmosphere in English stadia and I think playing for Liverpool will help improve my game – especially in being positive about coming out for crosses."

In Spain, Reina's shoot-out heroics earned him the nickname of *El Rey de los Penaltis*. But Benitez went one better the day Reina joined Liverpool, saying: "He's Spain's best goalkeeper, bar none." Miguel Reina would approve.

Keir Radnedge

FACT FILE

Club	Liverpool
Country	Spain
Born	August 31, 1982, in Madrid
Previous clubs	Barcelona, Villarreal
Honours	European Under-16 Championship 1999

3 Jhon VIAFARA

Portsmouth's box-to-box Colombian

LANKY COLOMBIAN MIDFIELDER Jhon Viafara has taken an even longer stride than usual – all the way across the Atlantic to join Portsmouth from Once Caldas in his homeland. The 26-year-old offers tough, if occasionally wild, tackling, the lung power to be able to burst from box to box, and a rocket right-foot shot capable of finding the net from range. These virtues were crucial to Once Caldas' shock triumph in last year's Libertadores Cup.

Viafara can operate through the middle, but Caldas found him to be more effective on the right. Their gameplan was based on sucking their opponents into central midfield and then slipping a pass to the flank to unleash one of his surging forward runs. His 30-yard screamer in the Final against Boca Juniors was one of the highlights of the tournament.

Viafara has now taken his club form into the national side. His attacking thrust was an important part of the recent convincing wins against Peru and Ecuador that helped get Colombia's World Cup qualifying campaign back on track. It was the first time he had looked completely at home in the course of a 19-cap international career.

Viafara's physical build and technical gifts should be well-suited to the Premiership. But, as so often in these cases, much will depend on how he settles in off the field. Just along the south coast, for example, Ecuadorean pair Agustin Delgado and Cleber Chala had a miserable time at Southampton.

The bad news for Portsmouth in this case is that Viafara is coming straight from Colombia; the country's most successful exports often first move to Argentina, which functions as something of a finishing school, adding professionalism and helping players adjust to a faster pace of football as well as the experience of living abroad. Viafara will have to make the big leap to England unaided.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

- **Club** Portsmouth
- **Country** Colombia
- **Born** October 27, 1978, in Robles
- **Previous club** Once Caldas
- **International caps** 19
- **Honours** Libertadores Cup 2004

4 Danny GABBIDON

Welsh defender finally making the grade

WELSH CENTRAL DEFENDER Danny Gabbidon must have done a double-take when newly-promoted West Ham thrust a contract in front of him this summer. Having been linked with a host of top-flight clubs in the past couple of years, only for nothing to materialise, Gabbidon could have been excused for thinking that he would never have the chance of testing himself against Henry, Van Nistelrooy and co. But Hammers boss Alan Pardew was prepared to back his judgement with hard cash, paying Cardiff City £3million for Gabbidon and Bluebirds team-mate James Collins, a promising young stopper.

The reasons why Premiership bosses were never completely sold on Gabbidon are something of a mystery. Had they not read the scouting reports describing his excellent form for Cardiff over the past five years? Had his good work for the Welsh national team simply washed over them? Some have suggested that what has counted against the 26-year-old was his reputation of being prone to lapses in concentration. But while he may indeed suffer from such a failing, it has not been a barrier to employment in the elite in the past – just ask Rio Ferdinand or Sol Campbell.

It was not by fluke that Gabbidon, who began his career at West Bromwich Albion before moving to Cardiff in 2000, was able to neutralise the likes of Alex Del Piero, Vincenzo Montella, Jan Koller and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer while playing for Wales. He is extremely quick, strong in the tackle, a proficient header of the ball and a good reader of the game. He also has ice running through his veins, never losing composure even in the most menacing of moments. After Wales beat Italy 2-1 in a memorable Euro 2004 qualifier in Cardiff, Del Piero was heard to utter his amazement that Gabbidon was not from a Premiership club. That says it all.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

- **Club** West Ham United
- **Country** Wales
- **Born** August 8, 1979, in Cwmbran
- **Previous clubs** West Bromwich Albion, Cardiff City
- **International debut** March 2002, v Czech Republic
- **International caps** 16 (0 goals)

5 Per KROLDRUP

Literature-loving Dane opting for Everton adventure

AT ONE POINT this summer, talented centre-back Per Kroldrup had looked set to quit Udinese for the Bundesliga. According to sources in Germany, the 26-year-old Dane was very close to agreeing terms with Schalke but had second thoughts when his agent, Ippolito Gallovich, heard of the interest of Everton boss David Moyes.

A telephone chat with his international team-mate Thomas Gravesen, a former Everton midfielder, convinced Kroldrup that Goodison Park was the place for him. The fact that Everton could pay the £5million fee up front – and not in instalments, as Schalke proposed – was the clincher.

Kroldrup began his career with Danish Second Division side B93 Copenhagen, but he missed out the first time he looked for a big move abroad following an unsuccessful trial at Arsenal in late 2000. Then in the summer of 2001, he joined Udinese of Serie A and, after finding the going tough in his first six months there – English coach Roy Hodgson did not particularly rate him – he developed into one of the favourites of Hodgson's successors, Gianpiero Ventura and Luciano Spalletti.

Kroldrup, who usually operated on the left side of Udinese's defensive trio, has many strengths. He bites into the tackle, is quick, anticipates danger, leaps well for headers at either end of the pitch and uses the ball intelligently. Over the past three years, few Serie A defenders have been as consistent as the Dane, and it speaks volumes that Juventus had him on their wish-list a year ago.

A non-playing member of Denmark's Euro 2004 squad, he has been a regular for Morten Olsen's side this season. And at club level, he should be at home in Liverpool, the European City of Culture in 2008; the works of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Hemingway are his favourite reading matter.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	Everton
Country	Denmark
Born	July 31, 1979, in Farso
Previous clubs	B93 Copenhagen, Udinese (Ita)
International debut	February 2004, v Turkey
International caps	6 (0 goals)

6 Mohamed SISSOKO

Strong-minded Mali midfielder

YOUNG MALIAN INTERNATIONAL midfielder Mohamed Sissoko, whom Liverpool recently snatched from under the noses of Everton, is a character who knows his own mind.

Not many 18-year-old youth team players have stood up to the authoritarian Guy Roux, who recently stepped down as Auxerre coach. Yet that is what Sissoko did in the summer of 2003, telling the veteran boss that he should already be in the Burgundian club's first XI and that he would imminently be leaving for Valencia.

His move provoked no end of sound and fury in French football circles. Since Sissoko had yet to sign a professional contract with Auxerre, he was technically entitled to move to Valencia for free. Auxerre claimed that Sissoko had engineered the split by refusing their offer of a full-time deal and took the matter to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, eventually winning an out-of-court agreement worth £700,000. The French club, though, remain bitter to this day, claiming that the young African was "stolen" from them.

For a £5million fee, Liverpool have bought a multi-dimensional player. At Auxerre, Sissoko was a fine attacking midfielder, known for his incisive passing and goalscoring. Yet on joining Valencia, whose coach Rafa Benitez is now at Liverpool, he was handed a deeper midfield role to take advantage of his strength.

While Sissoko was never an automatic first-choice during his two years at Valencia, he played in 45 League games and did a good job when called on to deputise for David Albelda or Ruben Baraja in central midfield.

Sissoko has also switched international allegiance. Despite being born and bred in France and having played for *Les Bleus* at Under-16 and Under-17 level, he opted last year to play his senior international football with Mali, the land of his parents. It has worked out well. At the 2004 African Nations Cup, "Momo" was one of the stars of the show as the Eagles came fourth.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	Liverpool
Country	Mali
Born	January 22, 1985, in Mont Saint-Aigan, France
Previous clubs	Auxerre (Fra), Valencia (Spa)
International debut	January 2004, v Kenya
International caps	11 (2 goals)
Honours	UEFA Cup 2004; Spanish League 2004

Lukas PODOLSKI

Youngster hailed as Germany's big hope

SOME MIGHT FIND it surreal that many German fans and sportswriters consider a 20-year-old with limited experience in the Bundesliga – 19 games to be exact – to be the saviour of the national team. But unlike all those so-called "next great things" who arrive in a flurry of headlines and promptly fade away, Koln striker Lukas Podolski is worthy of all the hype.

Not since Lothar Matthaus exploded on the scene some 25 years ago has a youngster made such an instant impact on the national team. With six goals in his last seven games, including three at the recent Confederations Cup, Podolski has gone a long way to becoming an automatic first-choice. Jurgen Klinsmann is keeping his striker options open but the smart money at the moment would be on Podolski and Kevin Kuranyi starting the World Cup finals next year.

Former Bayern Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld certainly thinks Podolski has what it takes, saying: "He is looking the part. It's unbelievable how cool, how battle-hardened he already is. The goal he scored against Mexico [a sweetly-struck angled drive from the edge of the box] in the Confederations Cup was absolute class."

Thunderous left-footed shooting, speed, clever movement and upper body strength are not the only assets of "Prinz Poldi". Another is his supreme self-confidence, the complete absence of fear in his game. Whether playing for Germany or helping Koln win the 2004-05 Second Division – he ended up top scorer in that league with 24 goals – he is the same irrepressible character.

"One game is the same as another," says Podolski, Poland-born but brought up in the Rhineland. "It's easier to play for the national team than in the Second Division, where I can have three men on me. I'm always ready for a game. I want to win, even in training.

"The Second Division has been a good school for me. I've made progress in every area of my game. At Euro 2004 Rudi Voller [the then Germany coach] told me playing in the Second Division would be a great way of preparing for international football. He was right."

Podolski knows he is a rare talent. Even if the German media did not continually sing his praises, he would still back himself to run any defender in the world ragged. Yet he is also aware he has to tread a careful path and not allow all the commercial opportunities, media paeans and lifestyle excesses to deflect him from his craft.

"At 20 no one can argue they are the finished article," says Podolski, a hot tip to move to Bayern Munich next summer. "I can improve across the board but I especially need to work on my right foot, my heading and the timing of my runs. In two or three years my career could go backwards if I don't put the effort in. If I apply myself I can achieve my goal of playing for Germany at the World Cup."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Country	Germany
Club	Koln
Born	June 4, 1985, in Gliwice, Poland
International debut	June 2004, v Hungary
International caps	13 (7 goals)
Honours	German Second Division 2005

Cristiano LUCARELLI

Journeyman aiming to take the ultimate trip

EVERY DOG HAS his day. Twelve months ago, not too many pundits would have predicted Livorno striker Cristiano Lucarelli would end the season as the leading goalscorer in Serie A. Even fewer would have dared suggest he might earn his first cap for Italy within the year – an event that duly came to pass in June – and in the process write himself into the long-term calculations for Germany 2006.

"You couldn't write a novel like the season I have just had," says Lucarelli. "Twenty-four goals in Serie A, a call-up [to the Italy squad], a cap and then a goal on my debut [in the 1-1 friendly draw with Serbia & Montenegro in Toronto]. After all the storms I've been through in my career, it was time for a bit of sunshine."

Until last season, Lucarelli, 30 in October, had always seemed the archetypal journeyman – solid, reliable and good for a few goals. But most would have argued he had left his best days behind.

Emerging in Serie A late in the 1997-98 season to score five goals for Atalanta, he moved to Valencia that summer and it looked as if he was launched on a top-flight career. But through inexperience and a falling-out with coach Claudio Ranieri, Lucarelli spent just one season at the Mestalla, scoring only once in 13 League games.

Since his return to Italy he has journeyed around the nether regions of Serie A, with relegation strugglers Lecce, Torino and most recently Livorno. Although Lucarelli hit a very respectable 27 goals in two seasons with Lecce, he managed only 10 in two campaigns with Torino, who were relegated at the end of 2002-03. But he never lost motivation and is now reaping the rewards of his shock decision to switch to hometown club Livorno two summers ago, shunning Torino and an annual salary of £350,000 after tax. "No one understood," says Lucarelli. "It seemed like madness. If it hadn't worked out, it would have been the end."

Instead, he hit 29 goals to fire Livorno into Serie A for the first time since 1949, then bagged another two dozen last term to prompt that national team call-up. "It's not easy to be noticed playing in a side fighting relegation," he says. "To tell the truth, though, this season all the ball had to do was bounce off me and it was in the net."

Although he missed a penalty in Italy's next game, a 1-1 draw with Ecuador in New Jersey, Lucarelli remains positive and believes he will be in the frame when Marcello Lippi picks his squad for Germany 2006. Given the competition, he may be a trifle optimistic. But he is not the sort to ignore reality completely, saying: "Footballers have six or seven years of so-called glory, then go back to normality. I just try to stay as normal as possible. It's how I was brought up."

Paddy Agnew

FACT FILE

Country Italy
Club Livorno
Born October 4, 1975, in Livorno
Previous clubs Cuoi Pelli, Perugia, Cosenza, Padova, Atalanta, Valencia (Spa), Lecce, Torino
International debut June 2005, v Serbia & Montenegro
International caps 2 (1 goal)

WS WORLD SOCCER GLOBAL VIEW Paul Gardner

Another fine mess for Mexico

The recent drug-tests affair is one in a series of screw-ups

OF COURSE, it wouldn't be Mexican soccer if there weren't a screw-up somewhere along the way. At the very moment when things looked to be at their brightest, when Mexico were impressing everyone at the Confederations Cup with their neat and skilful soccer and with their new-found ability to defend, right at that happy moment came the bad news.

Two players had been sent home from Germany for "disciplinary reasons". Unwisely, the Mexicans tried to be clever about the matter, tried to disguise the real reason. And if there's one thing the Mexicans are not very good at, it's organising a cover-up.

The rumours of failed drug tests surfaced at once. The Mexican FA denied them, while coach Ricardo Lavolpe chided journalists who enquired, telling them it was none of their business.

Bad enough, but it got much worse than that. Franz Beckenbauer, the very pillar of footballing rectitude, publicly announced that he had been assured by no less an eminence than FIFA president Sepp Blatter that "this was purely a disciplinary matter and nothing to do with doping".

'If there's one thing the Mexicans are not very good at, it's organising a cover-up'

Evidently, Blatter had received assurances from the Mexicans that all was well, and that the two players sent packing – Salvador Carmona and Aaron Galindo – were drug-free.

Talk about embarrassment. A day later came the admission from the Mexican FA that both Galindo and Carmona had failed drug tests taken before the Confederations Cup, but for which the results had only just come in.

The explanation for the tardy acknowledgment of the drug-taking was met with considerable scepticism. The Mexicans, clearly, had a compelling reason for wanting the drug-taking not to come to light: both players had played in Mexico's wins over Japan and Brazil, and there was the possibility that FIFA might annul those results.

FIFA did not take that step, but it has announced that its disciplinary committee will be investigating "the conduct of the Mexican Football Association during the competition".

The FA has fallen foul of FIFA before. In 1988, Mexico qualified for the following year's World Youth Cup in Saudi Arabia by finishing second in CONCACAF'S preliminary tournament.

But Guatemala, organisers of the event, alleged that Mexico had used over-age players, and at a stormy CONCACAF meeting, the charges were upheld. Four members of the Mexican FA, including its president, were banned from football for life, and Mexico were thrown out of the Youth Cup finals.

Earlier, I mentioned Mexican ineptitude at covering things up. This was hilariously exposed in the 1988 affair when it was discovered that several of the over-age players were listed in the Mexican FA's own yearbook, along with their correct ages.

FIFA reacted to the scandal with unusual severity. Where the Mexicans might have expected a ban from age-group football for a year or two, FIFA hit them with a two-year ban from all international competition. The entirely guiltless Mexican team that had already qualified for the 1988 Olympic Games would not be allowed to compete; but most shocking of all was that Mexico were banned from the 1990 World Cup.

Mexico were an ideal sacrificial lamb for FIFA. Too important a country to be dismissed as an easy target, but not so important that their absence from Italia 90 would upset any of the sport's growing legion of sponsors and television companies.

If the Mexicans were afraid of FIFA's wrath during this year's Confederations Cup, what happened in 1988 helps to explain why. Carmona and Galindo, both of whom play for Cruz Azul, have now been suspended for a year by the Mexican FA. According to FA president Alberto De la Torre, they had taken an anabolic steroid.

Before the storm...Carmona vies with Brazil's Gilberto

So Mexico, who had played really well in the Confederations Cup, finishing fourth, returned home not on a wave of euphoria but under a cloud of suspicion.

There was little time to sort things out, for the Gold Cup (CONCACAF's national team championship) began a week later.

Going backwards

And suddenly, on the field, Mexico were back to their indecisive worst. Gone was the assurance and the fast-paced football of the Confederations Cup. Mexico lost their first game 2-1 to an under-strength South Africa, a guest team. A 4-0 defeat of Guatemala suggested a recovery, but then they struggled to beat Jamaica 1-0.

The old Mexico appeared during the quarter-final against Colombia – another guest side who were not at full strength – the Mexico of good soccer, but the Mexico that lacked a killer touch. A game that should have been won comfortably was lost, because the Mexicans couldn't finish. Part of the problem was the team were lacking top scorer Jared Borgetti.

Borgetti was getting ready to join Bolton. One can only hope his move will not be yet another Mexican screw-up. Very few Mexican players have been successful outside their homeland. Yet here was Borgetti apparently on his way to England, the one European country that has never shown much of an affinity for Latin American players.

Game of chance?

Simon Banks examines the potential effects of the growth of football-related betting

IN CASE YOU hadn't noticed, the world has gone gambling mad. Last month, an internet poker site was floated on the London Stock Exchange and raised £5billion, making it more valuable than Marks & Spencer. That flotation highlights the massive growth in the online gaming sector over the past few years and, of course, football wants some of the action. But the only people apart from bookmakers who appear to have benefited so far from the explosion in online gambling in the football sector are criminal gangs, who have found new ways to place bets to take advantage of match-fixing.

European football had been largely immune from big-scale match-fixing scandals because betting has only been possible on state-regulated lotteries and pools. However, the rise of the internet has made gambling truly global, so it is possible for people to bet on matches with companies based in offshore havens. At the same time, the European Commission believes many European governments are running pools and lotteries that are effectively protected state monopolies and therefore contrary to European competition law, so it is saying the games should be opened up to foreign competition.

The growth of internet gambling and the ending of state-controlled pools and lotteries, which require the prediction of a number of results rather than just one, have created myriad betting mediums that criminal elements can exploit.

The match-fixing scandal in Germany involving referee Robert Hoyzer is well known. But other scandals are unfolding on an almost weekly basis. Last month, the Finnish League's chief executive, Jan Walden, said that football in the country was facing its greatest crisis after champions FC Haka beat last season's runners-up Allianssi 8-0 in a League game. Allianssi, who were recently bought by a Chinese businessman, fielded nine players making their first-team debut, and there were unprecedented levels of wagering on the game.

"I have never seen anything like it. It could have ended 20-0," said Walden. "The main thing in football is to try one's best. Allianssi didn't."

Suspected bribery

Poland and the Czech Republic have also been hit by match-fixing scandals. Police in both countries have arrested referees and officials suspected of taking bribes to engineer results. And, of course, any engineering that has gone on in all these cases would have allowed people to benefit by "betting" on the outcome.

Football's response to the growth of gambling has been mixed. Last year, the English FA told a panel of MPs investigating betting on sports that it didn't think there was a problem but couldn't be sure because it couldn't afford to properly monitor the situation. In contrast, the German federation (DFB) has said that, following the Hoyzer scandal, it is looking at setting up its own betting operation, in partnership with an established bookmaker. The DFB says that this would allow it to monitor suspicious betting trends and then take action, such as changing match officials ahead of the games in question. What the DFB has chosen not to highlight is that it could gain a significant new revenue stream from such a move.

The global gambling industry is in a growth stage, with many new companies desperately trying to attract what they hope will be loyal new customers. Because of this, an inordinate amount of money is being spent on advertising and sponsorship. Take a look at top-flight televised matches in the coming season and see how many clubs have shirt sponsorship deals with gaming companies and how many perimeter boards have been bought by bookmakers. If you are registered with a club website, note how many spam e-mails arrive in your in-box inviting you to sign with the club's "official betting partner".

'This season, see how many clubs have shirt sponsorship deals with gaming companies'

The challenge for football is to exploit the opportunities offered by the growth in gambling while at the same time protect the game's integrity. When the pay-TV industry was at the same stage as the gambling industry is now, football was accused in some quarters of selling its soul and thinking of itself only in terms of media content. Some people already appear to view football as little more than "gambling content", but it is hoped that the authorities, in their attempts to cash in on a boom, resist the temptation to go overboard. But you wouldn't bet on it.

Safety in numbers...it is virtually impossible to engineer a successful multi-match bet, but single matches can fall prey to fraud

England v Scotland over Olympic soccer

The 2012 decision sparks a debate about a combined UK team

Victory...the public revel in London's successful bid, but which football team will they be cheering?

LONDON'S TRIUMPH IN winning the right to host the 2012 Olympic Games has thrown British football into confusion. The English FA wants to run a combined host team, but its Scottish counterpart is opposed to the notion for one clearly-stated reason and also, one assumes, an unstated one.

So far, FIFA has sat back on the issue, but if push comes to shove, it will side with the English FA because it wants to maintain the high profile of Olympic football, and that is impossible without a host team.

The Scots say, as they have said in the past, that a combined team would offer a hostage to fortune, to opponents of the four-way split of the UK in international events and in the FIFA and UEFA Congresses.

Ten years ago it was a reasoned argument. No longer. Not since FIFA's statutes were revised last year, with the historic independent status of the home nations retained virtually by acclamation.

The Scots' other concern? I understand this relates to the continuance of "their" David Will as the home countries' statutory vice-president of FIFA. Once before, in the notorious failed coup of Keith Wiseman, the English FA failed ignominiously to try to regain that prestigious role. The SFA fears that a London-centred Olympics will offer England a chance to launch another attempt.

I have not asked Will whether he hopes to be still a member of the FIFA executive in 2012. I rather doubt it. That means there will not be an issue anyway and the Scots would be better off on the inside than on the outside. What's that saying about keeping your friends close and your enemies even closer?

It's not as if a joint team at the Olympics is a new idea. The Koreans almost managed it in 1988 in Seoul, and talks continue about their sending a unified football team to the 2006 Asian Games. If two countries still technically at war can manage it, then so can England and Scotland, not to mention Wales and Northern Ireland.

Juve on the cheap

Fun on the season-ticket front. A pre-season record of 360,135 were sold in Germany as World Cup fever mounts. In Italy, Milan also cracked a record 40,000 by mid-July. However, Juventus, fighting hard to lure fans to the despised Stadio Delle Alpi, have not only cut prices but also introduced a 19-euro [£13] season ticket for women and under-13s.

Houllier on a high

Good luck to Gerard Houllier, back in football at Lyon and as passionate about the game as ever. There was no rancour, either, about his premature departure from Liverpool. Houllier was there in Istanbul, wrapped up by his old players in their Champions League celebrations. He describes the experience as "one of the 10 greatest moments of my life".

Happy minnows...TNS take on Liverpool

UEFA's central mistake

THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION is taking the UEFA Cup down the Champions League road. Wrongly in my view. TV income from next season's centrally-controlled marketing will be split among clubs according to the value and volume of the domestic rights and ratings. That means more for the English, Italian and Spanish clubs compared with the Finns, Cypriots and Icelanders. So the rich will get richer and the poor poorer in the secondary UEFA club competition as well as in the Champions League.

Michel Platini will not like that. His bid for the UEFA presidency in 2007 is built on a back-to-the-future ethos. He would, for example, have been delighted by holders Liverpool's early-round Champions League ties against TNS of Wales and FBK Kaunas of Lithuania.

Platini says: "Nowadays, the Champions League has become a private club, and the small countries have become second-class citizens. Football is not only business, it is also sport, and if the enthusiasm for that sport is not fed it will die."

Liverpool, Real Madrid and Milan may not fancy starting every season in the small-crowd outposts of the early qualifying rounds, especially since these ties are played at a time when the big boys are often on lucrative pre-season tours – Madrid, for example, earned £30million on their recent jaunt around the United States and the Far East. But the minnows love it.

As Kaunas' Russian coach, Alexander Piskarev, said before the Liverpool tie: "We have never gone further than this. But if we go out against Liverpool, the great champions, how much better than losing to the champions of, say, Albania."

Blatter 6 Netzer 0

THE RESULT OF FIFA'S "match" with Infront, headed by ex-Germany playmaker Gunter Netzer, over TV rights for the 2010 World Cup was decisive: Sepp Blatter 6, Netzer 0.

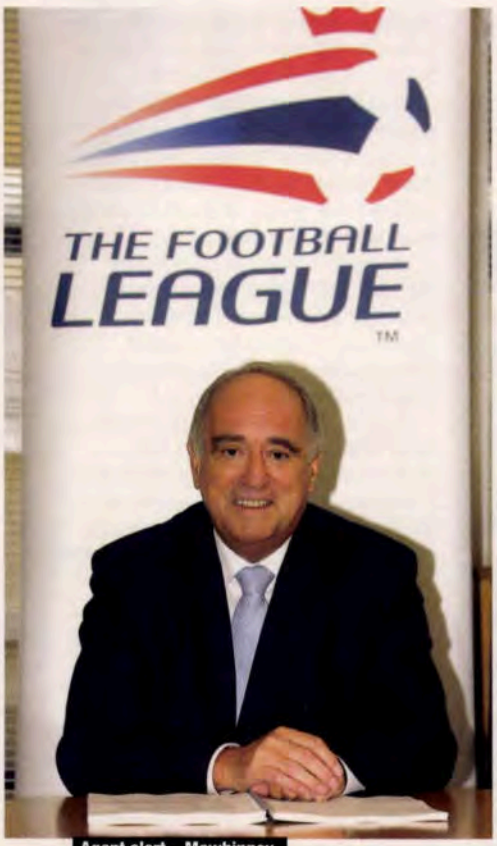
Infront had come to the rescue by sorting out the European TV deals for 2006 after the collapses of previous rights-holders ISL, then Kirch. But Infront was then dealt a hammer blow by the FIFA president on the day of the Confederations Cup Final in Frankfurt when he announced that its offer for 2010 had been rejected.

Blatter and his accountants had worked out that there was more money to be had in selling rights individually to the Big Five (England with BBC and ITV, France/TF1, Germany/ARD and ZDF, Italy/Sky and RAI, and Spain/TVE) and packaged to the rest of the continent through the European Broadcasting Union. "This means we will reach 1billion euros [£700m], which is twice as much as for [World Cup] 2006," said Blatter happily.

Not that FIFA needs waste too much time in self-congratulation. Trouble is brewing further on down the commercial ladder, where FIFA's six main World Cup sponsors have coughed up £180million each for 2010 and 2014.

Not surprisingly, they are questioning whether this means value for money. A recent survey suggests the answer is no. But they have little room for manoeuvre. If one sponsor drops out, its major global rival will step in. MasterCard and the rest are trapped.

Rights issue...Blatter and Netzer



Agent alert...Mawhinney

Mawhinney's mission

NO SURPRISE TO hear Lord Brian Mawhinney, chairman of the Football League, proposing a unilateral crackdown on agents – to whose wiles his clubs, lacking the protection of the enforced transfer windows, have been significantly susceptible.

Now the League is having to take transfer "season" restrictions on board, Mawhinney may find the problem receding.

But global solutions remain essential. Mawhinney is not the only voice cursing rogue agents. Top Italian agent Vincenzo Morabito is also angry – not surprisingly, since rogue agents are costing him business. Morabito, a senior figure in First Artist, blames FIFA's decision to devolve control of agents to the individual national associations.

Some take the work more seriously than others. In England, the Football Association demands to see a full accounting of every transfer, including agents' fees. But nothing like that exists in Italy, where a significant chunk of the transfer market is driven by the Gea World agency. Its president is Alessandro Moggi, son of Luciano Moggi, general manager of Juventus and master wheeler-dealer in the transfer market in his own right.

Morabito says: "Our problem is that the Italian federation takes no interest. It doesn't enforce the rules. Ever since FIFA handed responsibility back to the federations it's been like a jungle, with a proliferation of unlicensed agents. There's no way of controlling them because many work in one country and are registered in another. Then there are the problems, which are obvious, with the influence of Gea.

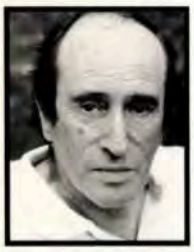
"In Italy there used to be just three of us who specialised in international transfers. That's all changed. When Middlesbrough were interested in Stephen Appiah [who ultimately left Juventus for Fenerbahce] at least seven agents claimed a share.

"Look at the Robinho wrangle. We're in danger of a new Bosman case the way things are going – and that will be bad for everyone."

The jungle's tentacles have spread far and wide. The sudden departure of Brazilian striker Ailton from Schalke to Besiktas is another example that even the most powerful agents are vulnerable.

One of the top agents in Germany is Roger Wittmann, whose stable of players includes many of the big earners at Schalke. One was Ailton. But that didn't stop other agents trying to muscle in. The outcome was inevitable. Ailton, infamously easily influenced, is like Appiah also off to Turkey.

Good luck, then, to Mawhinney. If he can devise a scheme to bring agents and the transfer system to order there's a job waiting for him in Zurich!



Brian Glanville on the prolific career of Silvio Piola

Big hitter

Turin time...with Juventus in 1946

THE LATE GEORGE MALE often used to talk to me about That Goal by Italy against England in 1939 in Milan, and would be at pains to exculpate the scorer, Silvio Piola.

What happened was that a long ball was played down the middle, and Piola, aware he couldn't reach it with his head, stretched out an arm and fisted it past keeper Vic Woodley into the net, following through to catch Male in the eye. The German referee, Dr Pecos Bauwens, allowed the goal to stand, though England fought back to draw 2-2.

'He was the outstanding centre-forward of the 1938 World Cup, with five goals'

Male always insisted that Piola had never meant to hit him, and eventually, one day in Florence, I put it to the Italian himself. "It was a lovely header!" he told me, grinning, and added: "I went like this," and aimed a punch over his shoulder.

The year before that England game, Piola had been a resplendent star at the World Cup finals in France, which Italy won, to retain the title. Even in a tournament that boasted the dazzling little Brazilian Leonidas, Piola, tall, quick and strong, was widely considered the outstanding centre-forward and scored five goals.

He created Italy's first goal within two minutes in the first-round match against Norway in Marseille, and then, after the Scandinavians had equalised late on, hit the winner five minutes into extra-time.

Although Piola had made those contributions, he had struggled to break free from Norway's close-marking defenders. But he reigned supreme in the next match, against France in the quarter-finals in Paris. Whether with foot or head, he was irresistible, creating chances for his fellow attackers, slipping to the wings when too heavily marked.

Piola scored twice in the second half – the first after pursuing a long pass from right-winger Amedeo Biavati, then nodding home from a Biavati flick – to send Italy through 3-1.

In the semi-final in Marseille, Piola so enraged Brazilian defender Domingas Da Guia with his pace, power and elusive skills that Da Guia fouled him brutally to concede a penalty. Giuseppe Meazza converted it to put Italy 2-0 ahead and they eventually won 2-1.

Piola scored twice more in the Final against Hungary back in Paris. Meazza set him up to put Italy 2-1 ahead after quarter of an hour, and 10 minutes from full-time, with his side 3-2 in front, Piola sealed victory after combining with Biavati, driving the ball into the net from the winger's back-heel.

Piola, born in September 1913 in the northern town of Robbio Lomellina, had made his name with the nearby Pro Vercelli club in the early 1930s. In 1934 he moved south to Rome, joining Lazio, with whom he would enjoy his best years.

His prolific first season in the capital earned him a first cap for Italy in March 1935 against Austria, and Piola enjoyed a dramatic debut, scoring both the goals in the 2-0 victory. Altogether he would play 34 times for Italy, hitting 30 goals.

Piola's largely distinguished international career ended in anti-climax in Florence in 1952. For obscure reasons, Italy had decided to bring him back into the team at the age of 38, after years of absence, against England. Alas, he was largely a static figure during the 1-1 draw, and ended up being deliberately kicked by England centre-half Jack Froggatt, who asserted later that he was sick of being elbowed by the Italian.

At club level, Piola headed back north after eight years with Lazio, first to Torino, then Juventus and finally Novara, with whom he set the Serie A goalscoring record of 290, which still stands.

Piola died, aged 83, in October 1996, in Gattinara, close to his birthplace.

World-beaters...Piola (right of trophy-wielding manager Vittorio Pozzo) celebrates Italy's 1938 triumph with the squad

Messi affair

Keir Radnedge hails Argentina's wonderkid as the star of a badly-scheduled World Youth Cup

Victor and the spoils...Messi parades the trophy after Argentina's record fifth World Youth Cup triumph

WORLD YOUTH CUP FINAL

July 2 - Utrecht
Argentina 2 (Messi pen 40, pen 75)
Nigeria 1 (Ogbuke 52)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 24,550. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Argentina: Ustari - Barroso, Garay, Paletta, Formica - Zabaleta, Torres, Gago (Biglia 72), Archubi (Armenteros 61) - Messi, Oberman (Aguero 57).
Nigeria: Vanzekin - Adefemi, Adeleye, James, Taiwo - Abwo (Okoronkwo 85), Kaita, Mikel, Owoeri - Isaac, Ogbuke.

NOTHING DELIGHTS ARGENTINIAN fans more than putting one over on Brazil. So imagine their delight after the World Youth Cup in Holland. Up to the finals, the two South American giants had each lifted the trophy four times. Argentina's 2-1 victory over a worthy Nigeria in Utrecht provided them with title No 5 in what was their sixth Final. Not only that, but they had edged Brazil in the semi-finals to get there.

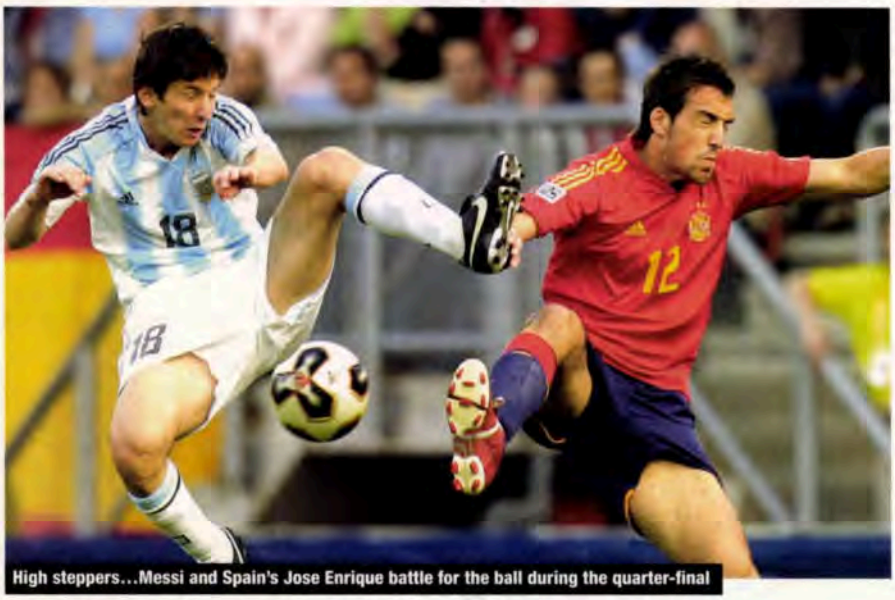
In both games, and indeed throughout the competition, Argentina's inspiration was Barcelona's Lionel Messi, the clear star of the tournament. The Brazilians had to be satisfied with third place after beating Morocco in the play-off.

European football thus finished up with a truly well-deserved award – nothing – for its half-hearted approach to this Under-20s tournament of perpetually entertaining and engrossing character.

The European attitude was summed up by the scant coverage in the continental media. *L'Equipe*, for instance, printed only the simple one-line result from the Final. No scorers. No team line-ups. No match report. One reason for this was the inane decision to stage the event at the same time as the unloved Confederations Cup in neighbouring Germany. Also, the Dutch did not make the most of the event, the fault of several of the host towns and cities, whose valuation of the promotional opportunities was clouded by the word "youth".

FIFA tours its junior events around countries that can never – though size, logistics, finance, etc – host the senior World Cup. In regions such as South America, Africa and Asia local response is intense. Sadly, Europe, the banker of world football, remains decidedly sniffy. One perverse lesson of Holland 2005, then, is that FIFA should focus its missionary work as much in the old world as in the new and the developing worlds.

In such a context it was only right and proper that the Final should have been contested by representatives of South America and Africa. That



High steppers...Messi and Spain's Jose Enrique battle for the ball during the quarter-final

Argentina won a record fifth crown was a deserved reward for a country that, whatever the state of its economy, maintains a football mass production line with a volume second only to Brazil.

But Argentina is not the only place where talent is flowering. The tournament underlined its increasingly effective role in tutoring the World Cup stars of tomorrow. European nations underrate at their peril the opportunity to give their youngsters early experience of such varied stages and styles.

Each succeeding World Cup showcases a growing number of World Youth graduates. We would see even more in Germany next year and then in South Africa in 2010 but for the deliberate skew of regional allocations that guarantees the global reach of the World Youth Cup. Thus, Europe will take up 14 (44 per cent) of the 32 slots in Germany but was restricted to only seven (29 per cent) of the 24 places available in Holland (including the hosts).

Not that youth success is a guarantee of success at the highest level. Spain have been Europe's most consistent nation at junior and youth level since neighbouring Portugal's "golden generation" grew up. Juan Santisteban and Inaki Saez have worked diligently and intelligently. But, frustratingly, they have laid the foundations for adult teams unable to pull their weight in World Cups and European Championships.

Logic points a finger of blame at the Bosman "release" of import restrictions, which left many bright young home-grown things kicking their heels on Liga subs' benches. No wonder more young Spanish talent wants to follow the example of playmaker Cesc Fabregas in pursuit abroad not so much of fortune as of "mere" first-team football.

The Arsenal youngster and his team-mates topped Group C by winning all three games, a feat matched by three other countries – Holland (Group A), China (Group B) and Colombia (Group E). Brazil, many observers' initial favourites, were surprisingly held to a 0-0 draw by Samson Siasia's Nigeria on their way to winning Group F, while Argentina's initial 1-0 defeat by the United States – with Messi, significantly, starting on the bench – opened the way for the Americans to top Group D.

Interestingly, three of the six European countries to make the second round squeaked through by finishing third in their group – only the four best third-placed teams from the six groups progressed. Benin and South Korea were the two third-place finishers who dropped out, along with bottom teams Australia, Panama, Honduras, Egypt, Canada and Switzerland. The Swiss, in Group F, would have progressed with just a draw from their last match against Nigeria but lost 3-0. The superb John Obi Mikel, released briefly from the wrangle over his services between Manchester United and Chelsea, scored his only goal at the finals, from a penalty.

In the knockout second round, Italy made the most of their third-place "escape" by snatching a 3-1 win from the jaws of defeat against the USA. The *Azzurrini*, a goal down at the break, owed their first appearance in the Youth Cup quarter-finals to three second-half strikes. The Americans had only themselves to blame. Chad Barrett, alone in front of keeper Emiliano Viviano, had fluffed a chance to make it 2-0. Viviano had earlier saved a penalty from Freddy Adu, but Egyptian referee Abd El Fatah ordered a retake because of infringements and Hunter Freeman stepped up instead of Adu to score what proved only a consolation.

Disappointing duel

Elsewhere, last-minute winning goals spelled disaster for both Asia's survivors – China and Japan being edged by Germany and Morocco respectively – as well as for Colombia.

The latter, the South American champions, had a disappointing duel with Argentina. Possibly they knew too well how to break the rhythm of each other's game. Colombia had marginally the better of the first half and went ahead after 52 minutes through Harrison Otalvaro. But Argentina kept both shape and purpose to winning effect, even though skipper Pablo Zabaleta, the multi-Youth Cup veteran, struggled through his poorest game of the finals.

Messi provided a rescuing equaliser just before the hour. Then, in stoppage time, Colombia fell apart. Abel Aguilar cleared off the line from Messi and keeper Libis Arenas made a superb stop from Emiliano Armenteros. But Arenas and his defenders were all helpless when Julio Barroso smacked in the winner with effectively the last kick of the game.

Spain dismissed Turkey with far greater ease than in last year's European Final. Then, it had taken a winner in stoppage time; now, two early goals from Real Madrid's Juanfran – his second after a tragi-comic blunder by left-back Ergun Teber, who was immediately and tearfully substituted – put the 2003 Youth Cup runners-up on their way to a 3-0 win without breaking sweat.

Complacency proved the Spaniards' undoing in the quarter-finals against Argentina as much as goals from Zabaleta, Gustavo Oberman and the inevitable Messi. That was the only quarter-final decided within the 90 minutes. Brazil needed extra-time to edge the Germans, and it took penalties for Morocco and Nigeria to see off Italy and hosts Holland respectively.

Germany coach Michael Skibbe, the only survivor of Jurgen Klinsmann's federation revolution, regretted the absences of Oliver Hampel and Lukas Podolski. Hamburg's Hampel had broken a leg against Egypt in the group stage, while Koln striker Podolski had been requisitioned by Klinsmann for the senior national team at the Confederations Cup.

That all four quarter-final winners had the energy to maintain their blistering pace in the semi-finals spoke volumes for their preparation.

Argentinian efficiency – and a ruthlessness that, surprisingly, earned only four yellow cards – overcame Brazil 2-1. Messi scored a superb early first and Zabaleta hit the winner, after Renato's equaliser, three minutes into stoppage time when the Brazilians were turning half an eye to instructions from their bench.

Nigeria were never endangered against Morocco, but both teams could be proud of producing a skilful game played at such a speed that it resembled a recording on fast-forward. Nigeria maintained their composure, shape and tactical discipline the better and might have won more clearly than even the goals of Taye Taiwo, Olubayo Adefemi and Chinedu Ogbuke suggested.

Thus, the final question for the nations' first meeting at this level was whether Argentinian savoir-faire, under the command of coach Pancho Ferraro, could contain the Nigerian whirlwind. The Africans certainly blew up an attacking storm, with Mikel at the heart of all that was incisive in their attack. But defensive concentration is the key to success against Argentina at any level, and here Siasia's men were found wanting, or perhaps tiring.

Messi scored both Argentina's goals from penalties; the first after he had been tripped by Dele Adeleye on 40 minutes and then, on 75, after Monday James fouled Sergio Aguero on the counter.

"This is the happiest day of my life," said Messi, ahead of his flight back to Barcelona, to Frank Rijkaard's nursery squad and a contract extension up to 2010 including a £100million buy-out clause.

In between Messi's conversions Ogbuke headed an equaliser from Adefemi's cross, but Nigeria had to make do with silver rather than gold, just as they had back in 1989 against Portugal.

Mikel finished runner-up to Messi in the Player of the Tournament rankings, with Taiwo third. Messi was also top scorer with six goals. His two spot-kicks in the Final lifted him past five-goal Fernando Llorente (Spain) and Oleksandr Aliiev (Ukraine). They also prompted wild celebrations back in Buenos Aires and personal predictions of a Maradona-esque future. Poor little rich boy. Holland 2005 may have ended in acclaim for Argentina but it left their hero bearing an impossible burden of expectation.

10 TO WATCH

Inventive...El-Zhar

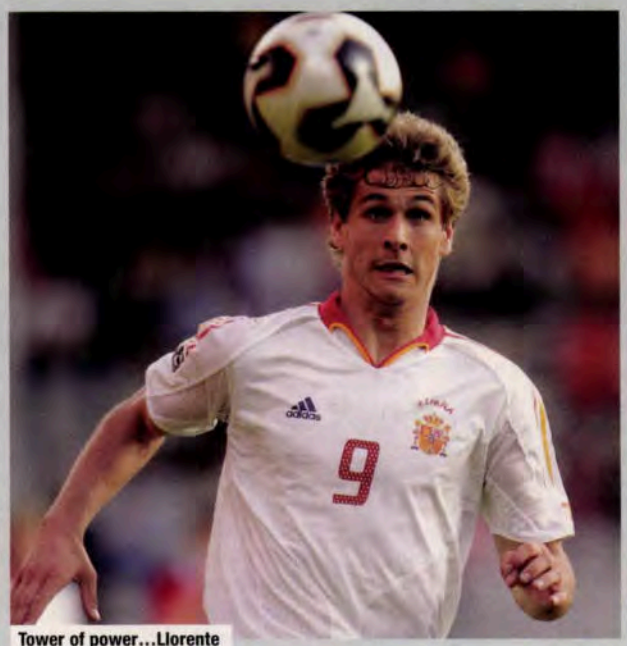
Oleksandr ALIIEV
(*Ukraine*)
Striker. Kyiv Dynamo.
Born 03.02.85
Inevitably labelled "the new Shevchenko" for his five goals and one assist for Ukraine in the group matches. Only lack of height and weight led to him – and Ukraine – being run out of their stride by Nigeria in the second round.

Julio BARROSO
(*Argentina*)
Defender. Boca Juniors.
16.01.85
Resourceful and sure-tackling full-back in the mould of so many predecessors at senior level. Provided intelligent support of both midfield and attack without forgetting his defensive priorities.

Nabil EL-ZHAR
(*Morocco*)
Forward. Saint-Etienne (Fra).
27.08.86
Most consistently inventive force for the hard-working Moroccan team. Like his team-mates, he went from strength to strength during the tournament.

FABIO SANTOS
(*Brazil*)
Defender. Sao Paulo.
16.09.85
Best of an inconsistent Brazil, who badly missed a cutting edge. Took matters into his own hands eventually, heading his side's late equaliser in the third-place play-off against Morocco before Edcarlos got the winner. Then flew home to help Sao Paulo win the Libertadores Cup.

Fernando LLORENTE
(*Spain*)
Striker. Athletic Bilbao.
26.02.85
Five goals and two assists earned the towering Llorente acclaim as one of the most powerfully dangerous forwards at the finals. But he may need more than aerial ability to progress in the grown-up game.


Tower of power...Llorente

Lionel MESSI
(*Argentina*)
Striker. Barcelona (Spa).
24.06.87
Player of the Tournament and also six-goal top scorer, with strikes in every game in the knockout stages. Barcelona gave him a lucrative new deal to head off Internazionale. Possibly the most influential player at a World Youth Cup since Diego Maradona in Japan in 1979.

John Obi MIKEL
(*Nigeria*)
Midfielder. Lyn Oslo (Nor).
22.04.87

Creative skill...Owusu-Abeyie

Attracted initial attention because of the transfer tug-of-war between Chelsea and Manchester United but then justified the fuss with his performances. Described by one observer as "a potential new Vieira".

Quincy OWUSU-ABEYIE
(*Holland*)
Forward. Arsenal (Eng).
15.04.86
His creative skill even raised brief hopes that hosts Holland might prove surprise winners. His talented displays underlined why Arsenal, in their haste to sign him, fell victim to the rules about unlicensed agents.

Taye TAIWO
(*Nigeria*)
Defender. Marseille (Fra).
16.04.85
About as much a full-back as Cafu or Paolo Maldini. His stamina, pace and footballing intelligence took him not only far up the flank but also into zones that most left-backs recognise only with binoculars.

Best for last...Ustari

Oscar USTARI
(*Argentina*)
Goalkeeper. Independiente.
03.07.86
Probably the best of the crop of goalkeepers on show. Saved his best performance for the Final against Nigeria when his reflexes kept Argentina on terms midway through the first half.

Sparta rise after turbulence

For the high jump?...Sparta's Bouaouzan could face jail for breaking an opponent's leg

HOLLAND

SPARTA ROTTERDAM, Holland's oldest professional club, will kick off the new season in the top flight after overcoming a turbulent end to last term. The club, founded in 1888, spent nearly the entire campaign leading the Second Division only to be overtaken by Heracles Almelo in the final stretch. When Sparta then lost their first match in the promotion/relegation play-offs, coach Mike Snoei was fired, and the intended successor, Rob Kiebert, died in a car accident. So former club defender and Euro 88 winner Adri Van Tiggelen took over and Sparta won their remaining five matches to seal a promotion berth.

But even now their troubles are not over. Rachid Bouaouzan, scorer of the promotion-clinching winner in the final play-off game against Helmond Sport, is facing a possible jail sentence after his horrific tackle on Go Ahead Eagles' Niels Kokmeijer last December. Kokmeijer suffered a complicated broken leg and may never be able to walk again. Bouaouzan faces up to eight years in prison.

Sparta's triumph in play-off Group B meant that De Graafschap, who finished only third, were relegated. RBC Roosendaal stayed up, however, by winning play-off Group A.

PSV Eindhoven's Double last term makes Guus Hiddink Holland's most successful coach in domestic competition. He has won five League titles and four national cups, one more of each than the late Rinus Michels. Hiddink, however, has his work cut out to retain the League crown. While last summer he lost his entire front line, this time his midfield is on the move, with Mark Van Bommel (Barcelona), Johann Vogel (Milan) and Park Ji-sung (Manchester United) all gone. The newcomers are Argentinian Osmar Ferreyra (CSKA Moscow), Finn Mika Vayrynen (Heerenveen) and Belgian Timmy Simons (Club Brugge).

The latter was wanted by Feyenoord but they couldn't afford him, much to the annoyance of compatriot Bart Goor, who promptly left the Rotterdam club to return to Belgium with Anderlecht.

One of the biggest transfers to date was the departure of AZ's technical director Martin Van Geel to Ajax. Van Geel, one of the architects of the Alkmaar club's success last term, has taken the position vacated by Louis Van Gaal last November. Ironically, Van Gaal is now settling in as coach of AZ.

There has been little movement on the playing front at Ajax, with Rafael Van der Vaart the one notable departure, to Hamburg. Swedish forward Marcus Rosenberg is a new arrival, from Malmo.

Holland's two World Cup qualifying victories at the start of June meant that Marco Van Basten set a Dutch record by remaining undefeated in his first 11 games as coach.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

SWITZERLAND

Ergic the key for sluggish Basle

Champions Basle made a sluggish start to their title defence, struggling to beat lowly Schaffhausen in their opening match. Australian midfielder Ivan Ergic headed the only goal to mark his return to the side after a long spell out of the game. Ergic, who joined in 2002, has played sporadically over the past two and a half years after being plagued by illness and bouts of depression.

Basle coach Christian Gross, who recently extended his contract until 2009, has lost internationals Philippe Degen, now at Borussia Dortmund, and Beni Huggel (Eintracht Frankfurt). Captain and defender Murat Yakin is also lined up for a move to Germany, to promoted Koln.

Murat's younger brother Hakan marked his return to Swiss football after a traumatic period at Stuttgart and then Galatasaray by scoring for Young Boys in their 3-1 opening day win away to Neuchatel Xamax.

Grasshopper, who have sold internationals Stefan Lichtsteiner (to Lille) and Christoph Spycher (Eintracht Frankfurt), did not impress as they beat promoted Yverdon 3-2 at home.

Zurich, whose international forward Daniel Gygax has joined Lichtsteiner at Lille, beat St Gallen 3-1 away.

Ivar von Rulach

AUSTRIA

Rapid face four-way fight

Defending champions Rapid Wien are likely to face strong competition this season, with Grazer AK aiming to build on last term's runners-up spot and Austria Wien and Salzburg spending big over the summer.

Austria, backed by Austro-Canadian billionaire Frank Stronach, signed Slovenia captain Nastja Ceh, who starred for Belgian champions Club Brugge last season, Slovak forward Filip Sebo, Dutch defender Delano Hill and Croat defender Mario Tokic.

"Nastja, in particular, is able to lead us to new heights, not only in Austria, but also in Europe," said head coach Peter Stoger.

Austria reached the UEFA Cup quarter-finals last term, but missed out on the domestic title for the second year running.

Salzburg, who finished second bottom in 2004-05, have signed no fewer than 13 internationals following their recent takeover by Dietrich Mateschitz, the Red Bull energy drink tycoon. They include

On their best behaviour...Charleroi fans celebrate

Card scheme scrapped

BELGIUM

AN IMPROVEMENT in crowd behaviour at League games has coincided with the demise of the despised Belgian fan card. The system succeeded in its aim of reducing hooliganism but the price was that thousands of casual, well-mannered fans stopped going to games, fed up with filling in countless forms and joining lengthy queues.

Now fans are expected to flock back, even though most of them will not be expecting anything other than the customary two-horse race for the championship between current holders Club Brugge and last season's runners-up, Anderlecht.

However, both clubs have undergone significant change during the summer. Coach Trond Sollied has ended his five-year reign at Brugge to take over at Olympiakos. His successor is Jan Ceulemans, from Westerlo, who has brought in another former Brugge legend, Franky Van der Elst, as his assistant. Van der Elst had been sacked as coach of Lokeren halfway through last season.

Sollied's departure sparked a player exodus, with Timmy Simons moving to PSV, Slovenian midfielder and free-kick specialist Nastja Ceh to Austria Wien, left-back Peter Van der Heyden to Wolfsburg and right-back Hans Cornelis to Genk.

Anderlecht lost top scorer Aruna Dindane to Lens but have made some quality signings, including former favourite Bart Goor (Feyenoord), Turkish striker Serhat Akin (Fenerbahce) and Lierse pair Marius Mitu and Laurent Delorge.

Anderlecht's former coach Hugo Broos has succeeded Rene Vandereycken at Genk, who qualified for the UEFA Cup after a dramatic end-of-season play-off with Standard Liege.

In other coaching appointments, Serb Slavoljub Muslin is in charge of Lokeren, Herman Vermeulen leads St Truiden after leaving relegated Ostende, and Herman Helleputte replaces Ceulemans at Westerlo after quitting Beveren, who appointed Vincent Dufour in his place. Meanwhile, Frenchman Albert Cartier, who impressed during the first half of last season with La Louviere, joined FC Brussels, with Emilio Ferrera moving in the opposite direction.

Nicholas Harling

Czech Republic striker Vratislav Lokvenc, Slovenia's Alexander Knavs, ex-Bayern Munich stars Alexander Zickler and Thomas Linke, former Arsenal keeper Alex Manninger and Brescia midfielder Markus Schopp.

Harry Miltner

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Cork float above Shels

Cork City took full advantage of Shelbourne's recent bad run to go top of the Premier Division. Shels, bidding for a hat-trick of titles, lost four out of six League games following their defeat by Linfield of Northern Ireland in the Final of the inaugural Setanta Cup at the end of May. One of these losses was at home to Cork, who went on to establish a six-point lead.

In an attempt to shore up Shels' title bid, manager Pat Fenlon has brought in former Waterford United player-manager Alan Reynolds.

Sean Creedon

LIECHTENSTEIN

Green light for Gren

Former Swedish international Mats Gren has succeeded Martin Andermatt as coach of Vaduz after quitting as youth team boss at Swiss club Grasshopper.

Gren, though, will have to do without three major players next term – striker Franz Burgmeier, who has joined Swiss top-flight side Aarau, and Finns Jussi Nuorela and Antii Sumiala.

Graeme Crawford

Benfica feel summer heat

PORTUGAL

AFTER ENDING a traumatic 11-year title drought, the longest in club history, Benfica were hoping to enjoy a tranquil summer without the usual speculation over managerial changes and squad revolutions. It wasn't to be. Days after lifting the championship trophy, Giovanni Trapattoni announced he was leaving the club, citing homesickness as the major reason for his decision. Strangely enough, the Italian agreed to take charge of Stuttgart a few weeks later.

Out went Trap, in came former Ajax boss Ronald Koeman, who quickly promised a return to attacking football, sorely missed during his predecessor's tenure.

Then, on the day the squad was due back for pre-season training, right-back Miguel went missing. The international, a target for various European clubs, followed his agent's questionable advice and rebelled against president Luis Felipe Vieira, who had refused a bid of £4.1million from Fiorentina for him. The plot thickened when Miguel signalled his intent to rescind his contract. The consequent wrangle looks bound to go all the way to FIFA before it is settled.

FC Porto prepared for the new season in Holland under the guidance of new manager Co Adriaanse. The Dutchman, a renowned disciplinarian, made headlines by announcing the club's Brazilian contingent had to adapt to his hard-line philosophy. Midfielder Leo Lima quickly found it wasn't just talk when he was cut from the squad 10 days into the training camp in Arnhem for showing a lack of enthusiasm in training.

Sporting Lisbon's biggest deal was holding on to top scorer Liedson. The Brazilian, who has hit 40 League goals in two seasons, was a target for Corinthians and Stuttgart, among others. Liedson has now been joined at the Dragao by compatriot striker Deivid, from Bordeaux.

Pedro Pinto

Rebel...Miguel is furious Benfica denied him a move to Italy

Trouble in Trondheim

New pastures...Rosenborg's long-serving defender and captain Erik Hoftun has moved to Bodo/Glimt

NORWAY

THE THREE-WEEK July break has allowed Norwegian football to take stock of an unpredictable first half of the League campaign. The fact that promoted Start were six points clear at the top was a surprise, but it has been the fall of perennial champions Rosenborg that has been the real shock. The Trondheim club lay only seventh after 13 rounds, 12 points behind Start, and suffered the humiliation of being knocked out of the Cup, on their own ground, by Second Division Honefoss.

Rosenborg coach Per Joar Hansen has signed two Uruguayan internationals – Sebastian Eguren and Alejandro Lago – in an attempt to arrest the slide. Meanwhile, veteran defender and former club captain Erik Hoftun has left for Bodo/Glimt having failed to win a regular starting place during the spring. Hoftun, who won 11 straight championships with Rosenborg, had been set to sign for Sundsvall of Sweden but changed his mind at the last minute.

Second-placed Brann have signed Trond Fredrik Ludvigsen (from Bodo/Glimt) and Michael Helegbe (Liberty of Ghana) and sold Raymond Kvisvik to Fredrikstad. Valerenga, lying third, have bought international midfielder Magne Hoseth from FC Copenhagen and forward Tore Andre Flo from Siena.

Sigurd Odegaard

DENMARK

Brondby buckle down quickly

Brondby barely had time to celebrate clinching the Superliga title for the first time in three years before the new campaign began in mid-July.

Michael Laudrup's team were worthy victors, recovering from a slump in early spring to claim the championship by 12 points from FC Copenhagen. Inevitably, this led to some of their best players departing, notably international midfielder Thomas Kahlenberg, who went to Auxerre, and defender Sebastian Svard, to Vitoria Guimaraes. Brondby's most intriguing signing was Swedish midfielder Marcus Lantz from Hansa Rostock.

Many expect this to be Laudrup's last season in charge of the club, and that he will succeed Morten Olsen as national team boss next summer. Among his managerial rivals this season will be ex-Aston Villa defender Kent Nielsen, who led Horsens to promotion from Division One last term.

Another newcomer is former Arsenal manager Bruce Rioch, a surprise appointment by OB Odense. The 58-year-old Scot has set his team a target of winning the title, a feat they have not achieved in 16 years. "I know that both Brondby and FC Copenhagen are strong clubs, but I always go out to win," said Rioch, who has been out of management for four years.

Ulrik Laursen, signed from Celtic, will add strength to the OB defence.

Jim Holden

FINLAND

Allianssi fall foul of Belgian farce

Allianssi, last year's League runners-up, are in turmoil after a change of ownership that was supposed to herald the start of a grand new era.

The club, based in Vantaa, near Helsinki, recently announced they would sell the majority of their shares to a foreign business group, with the idea that it would provide more financial muscle and better contacts.

In short, the ambitious plan was to build a Finnish "super club" able to compete with the best in Scandinavia. However, the new investors may have had other ideas.

In charge was Ye Zheyn, an obscure Chinese businessman with alleged links to Asian pools companies. He has yet to show his face in Finland, sending Olivier Suray, a former Belgian League player, to represent him. Suray promptly sacked Allianssi's well-liked coach Ari Tiittanen, replacing him with Thierry Pister.

Suray also whisked in six new players from Belgium, who were all included in the starting line-up away to champions FC Haka despite looking ring-rusty, as were two little-known youth team players, all at the expense of established Finnish first-teamers. Allianssi's goalkeeper, Henri Sillanpaa, was even sent to Belgium for a seemingly fabricated club trial, and was replaced by a Belgian who had not played a serious match for some time and appeared to be carrying an injury.

As a result, Allianssi were trounced 8-0, and afterwards Pister was heard muttering he thought it had been a friendly and not a League game!

Public disquiet over the goings-on prompted chairman Erkki Alaja to resign, while the club could have their licence revoked if the League finds any evidence of fraudulent activity.

Pentti Hietanen

ICELAND

FH stay on course

FH are well on course to retain the League title after winning their first 11 games of the season. FH's storming start extended their unbeaten League run to 26 games, stretching back to May 2004. However, they fell at the Champions League's first hurdle, 4-1 on aggregate to Neftchi of Azerbaijan.

Former international goalkeeper Olafur Gottskalksson has been suspended indefinitely by the English FA for refusing to take a random drugs test after training with League Two Torquay in January. He left the club immediately after the incident.

Rab Christie

ESTONIA

Flora wilting

Flora Tallinn, League champions from 2001 to 2003, have hit trouble after a string of injuries. They lost 3-1 at home to leaders Tallinna VMK in early July and trailed by eight points at the halfway stage. Teet Allas, Joel Lindpere, Kristen Viikmae and top scorer Vjatseslav Zahhovaiko are all sidelined, the latter for the rest of the season with a broken leg.

Andres Must

LATVIA

Skonto coach quits after drubbing

Skonto Riga coach Jurijs Andrejevs quit after his side's humiliating 6-0 defeat by Macedonia's Rabotnicki Kometal in the Champions League first qualifying round first leg. Andrejevs, also the national team coach, is succeeded by Paul Ashworth. The 35-year-old Englishman has already been successful in Latvian football, having guided Ventspils to runners-up spot in 2001 and 2002, but faces a tough challenge getting Skonto back on track to win what would be their 15th consecutive League title. After 15 rounds, they trailed leaders Metalurgs Liepaja by nine points.

Andres Must

WALES

Money rolls in for TNS

Total Network Solutions, the Welsh Premier League's only fully professional club, are set to net around £250,000 from their Champions League ties with Liverpool. Although they lost both legs 3-0, TNS gave creditable performances.

Llanelli may also go fully professional following a takeover by international asset management company Jesco. Lucas Cazorla Luque, a former Spanish top division player, has been appointed director of football.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

The end for Omagh

Omagh Town, relegated from the top division last season, have folded after failing to overcome financial problems. Coleraine, also in financial difficulty, have been forced to sell striker Jody Tolan to champions Glentoran, while Pat McAllister and Gerry Flynn have joined Newry City.

Glentoran have also signed Portadown winger Peter McCann, while Linfield snapped up Oran Kearney, Ballymena United's highly-rated goalscoring midfielder.

Ballymena's new manager is former national team keeper Tommy Wright. He replaces the sacked Kenny Shiels, while Omagh manager Paul Kee has taken Wright's old job at Limavady.

Roy Kitson

New recruit...Mattias Jonson

Djurgardens bounce back into the hunt

SWEDEN

DJURGARDENS, who had a difficult season last year after two consecutive championship triumphs, are back in the race for the title. The Stockholm club topped the table at the halfway stage, a point clear of defending champions Malmo and IFK Gothenburg with a game in hand.

Djurgardens could be victims of their own success, however. The goals of towering Danish striker Soren Larsen have made him one of Scandinavia's most sought-after players, with Schalke leading the list of interested clubs. Promising midfielder Tobias Hysen is another potential departee. But Djurgardens have made a transfer splash themselves by signing Sweden forward Mattias Jonson from Norwich.

Malmo's signing of Finland captain Jari Litmanen from Hansa Rostock has generated a lot of public interest, but the 34-year-old has had repeated injury problems in recent years and may struggle to make an impact. Meanwhile, Malmo will be without experienced forward Niklas Skoog for the rest of the season through injury.

Pentti Hietanen

Strachan strapped for cash

Big picture...new Celtic boss Gordon Strachan

SCOTLAND

GORDON STRACHAN'S appointment as successor to Martin O'Neill was a morale boost to Celtic fans. But the former Scotland midfielder's hopes of retaining on-loan Craig Bellamy and out-of-contract Jackie McNamara were dashed when both moved on, to Blackburn and Wolves respectively.

Moreover, Strachan's signings – Mo Camara (Burnley, free), Jeremie Aliadiere (Arsenal, loan), Maciej Zurawski (Wisla Krakow, £2m), Artur Boruc (Legia Warsaw, loan) and Adam Virgo (Brighton, £1.5m) – show he is under tough financial restrictions.

Rangers have hardly been big spenders, either, though they appear to have made shrewd acquisitions in French defenders Jose-Karl Pierre-Fanfan and Brahim Hemdani, Argentinian striker Federico Nieto and ex-Hibernian captain Ian Murray.

Hearts' new manager is former Ipswich and Derby boss George Burley, who succeeds John Robertson.

Alan Fairley

Terim's turn again

TURKEY

Beacon of hope...Terim must work his magic again to keep Turkey's World Cup dream alive

THE NATIONAL TEAM, on a downward spiral since reaching the World Cup semi-finals three years ago, finally showed they had run out of fresh ideas to try to solve their problems when pulling out an old trump card in the hope that it still works.

Fatih Terim, who was last national coach nine years ago, was rehired to oversee the final three, make-or-break World Cup qualifying games. The 51-year-old succeeds Ersun Yanal, who was fired after Turkey could only draw 0-0 at home to Greece in early June.

Terim said it took him exactly 15 seconds to accept the job, which shows, at least, that he is extremely keen. "They told me that I was needed at the side of Turkey's football and Turkey's players, so I accepted," he said. "As someone who loves his country, it was inevitable that I would do so."

Terim has been at a loose end since being sacked by Galatasaray last season, his second spell at the club, after a string of bad results. He probably also views the national team as unfinished business: Terim steered Turkey to their first European Championship finals in 1996, but his charges failed to even score as they lost all three group games. Afterwards, he was lured away for his first spell at Galatasaray, whom he led to four League championships and the UEFA Cup in 2000, then hopped across to Italy to lead Fiorentina and Milan.

After much hype about an influx of foreign stars to the Turkish League this summer, the biggest signing at press time was Ghanaian Stephen Appiah, by Fenerbahce from Juventus.

Suna Erdem

SLOVENIA

Bankruptcies hit hard

The new top division campaign kicked off with just 10 teams after three of last season's members were declared bankrupt. Olimpija, Slovenia's most famous club, have gone out of business altogether because of insurmountable debts. City rivals Ljubljana were demoted to the Fifth Division – meaning the capital now has no top-division representative – while Mura are now in the Third, under the name Mura 05.

Gorica exited the Champions League at the first hurdle, losing 3-2 on aggregate to SK Tirana, but beat promoted Krajina 4-0 on the first day of the domestic campaign to justify their status as favourites.

National team regular Fabijan Cipot will be sidelined for at least six months after breaking a leg in his first game for new club Brann of Norway, a friendly against Birmingham City.

Zdravko Reic

CROATIA

Blazevic scores early wins

Veteran former national team coach Miroslav Blazevic enjoyed a winning start in charge of champions Hajduk Split, who beat Cup holders Rijeka 1-0 in the Supercup and Osijek 6-0 on the opening day of the League campaign.

Blazevic was at Varteks Varazdin last term, taking over at Hajduk after the season ended when temporary boss Igor Stimac resumed his full-time job as sports director.

No arrests have yet been made over the murder of agent Dino Pokrovac on June 11. Pokrovac, who was shot five times, formerly represented Croatia and Hajduk star Niko Kranjcar.

Zdravko Reic

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Double trouble in Europe

There was trouble for two of the country's European representatives. Zrinjski were surprisingly knocked out of the Champions League by F91 Dudelange of Luxembourg, crumbling 4-0 at home when defending a 1-0 first-leg lead. Meanwhile, Zepce were penalised with a 3-0 defeat for fielding an ineligible player in their UEFA Cup first qualifying round, first leg against Baskimi of Macedonia, which finished 0-0. Zepce were only 12th in the League last term but

qualified for the UEFA Cup because none of the eligible clubs above them received a licence.

Zdravko Reic

MACEDONIA

Rabotnicki's roaring start

Rabotnicki Kometal enjoyed a marvellous Champions League debut, beating Latvia's Skonto Riga 6-1 on aggregate in the first qualifying round, but Sileks and Pobeda exited the InterToto Cup, losing to Beitar Jerusalem and Hamburg respectively.

Michel Stojmanovski

ISRAEL

Haifa under threat from Tel Aviv veterans

Maccabi Haifa's continued domestic dominance looks much less a foregone conclusion than in recent seasons after their potential challengers appeared to strengthen significantly.

Maccabi Tel Aviv, who now have a star-studded line-up of veteran players, appear to be the most attractive alternative to the champions. Former international Eyal Berkovic is on board, together with fellow midfielder Giovanni Rosso, who left Maccabi Haifa at the end of last season. So, too, is club icon Avi Nimni, back after two seasons in the wilderness. Nimni's sacking by coach Nir Klinger in 2003 sparked a major revolt among fans, but now Klinger has ended the Israel captain's exile at Beitar Jerusalem.

Hapoel Tel Aviv have recalled veteran coach Dror Kashtan, who led them to the UEFA Cup quarter-finals in 2002. The Reds have also signed midfielder Baruch Dago from arch-rivals Maccabi Tel Aviv.

Ori Lewis

CYPRUS

Six players ruled out

APOEL and Omonia, the two UEFA Cup representatives, both won their first qualifying round, first leg ties against Maltese opposition despite having been told they could not field a number of new signings just hours before the games.

UEFA ruled four APOEL players and two at Omonia were ineligible because they had been registered too late. Omonia still enjoyed an easy 3-0 win over Hibernians in Nicosia and APOEL beat Birkirkara 2-0 away.

The registration problem arose following a misunderstanding over the UEFA deadline between the FA and the clubs. APOEL chairman Prodromos Petridis blamed the association, who responded by insisting the clubs were responsible for understanding UEFA directions.

Soulis Theodosiou

MALTA

More silver for Sliema

Champions Sliema Wanderers took the first silverware of the new season by seeing off Hibernians and Birkirkara in the Euro Challenge Cup, a competition for the qualifiers for UEFA's two major club tournaments.

On the transfer front, Sliema finally got Italian defender Mauro Di Lello on their books, from Nocerina, having had to cancel his contract last season because his signing contravened FA rules concerning foreign players. Daniel Bogdanovic is also back after a loan spell with Gozo side Ghajnsielem, while Claude Mattocks has signed permanently from Floriana after a loan deal.

Hibernians signed Nigerian Haruna Doda from Birkirkara, while the club's striker Andrew Cohen was named Footballer of the Year after finishing League top scorer.

Domenico Aquilina

Champion move...Erwin Lemmens

Zenga flies in at Red Star

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

WALTER ZENGA, sacked by Steaua Bucharest in May, has quickly found new employment, becoming Red Star Belgrade's first foreign coach. The former Italy goalkeeper succeeds Ratko Dostanic, who quit after the club lost out to Partizan Belgrade in last season's League championship race and to unheralded Zeleznik in the Cup Final.

Zenga, 45, who joins Red Star on a two-year contract, was fired by Steaua when they stumbled during the Romanian championship run-in. However, the club did recover to win the title.

Red Star also have a new president, former international and FA chief Dragan Stojkovic, who was elected unopposed for a five-year term. The 40-year-old's appointment ends a saga stretching back to last October, when his predecessor, Dragan Dzajic, originally resigned the position. In the intervening months, Red Star first rejected Dzajic's resignation, then Dzajic announced his comeback in April, only to step down again a month later.

Stojkovic's position as FA president has been taken on an interim basis by vice-president Tomislav Karadzic, with elections for the new full-time president scheduled for next summer.

A week after Zeleznik beat Red Star in the Cup Final, their owner, Dragan Bulic, decided to pull out of professional football, saying that his investment was not paying off. With their funding cut off, Zeleznik merged with Second Division Vozdovac, meaning they lost their place in the UEFA Cup. However, the new entity will play in the top division next season. Bulic also owned another top-flight club, Radnicki Novi Belgrade, who have withdrawn from the division and will now play at a lower level.

In charge...Zenga is trying his luck in Belgrade

Radnicki's departure meant that Borac Cacak, who finished fourth bottom last season, were reprieved from relegation. Fourth-placed OFK Belgrade took Zeleznik's UEFA Cup spot.

Vladimir Novak

Olympiakos turn to Trond

GREECE

NORWEGIAN TROND SOLLIED, who led Club Brugge to the Belgian championship last term, is the new man in charge of Double winners Olympiakos following the resignation of Serb Dusan Bayevic. Sollied agreed a two-year deal after the Piraeus club's first choice, ex-Lyon boss Paul Le Guen, turned them down.

The Norwegian's salary is £760,000, while Olympiakos must pay Brugge £260,000 compensation for breaking his contract.

Bayevic stood down just a week after Olympiakos clinched the Double, saying: "Perhaps all the strength and knowledge I have was not enough for the big European vision of Olympiakos." Although the club enjoyed domestic success last season, they exited the Champions League at the group stage after losing 3-1 to Liverpool on the final matchday.

The champions' new signings include Cypriot striker Michalis Constantinou from arch-rivals Panathinaikos, Belgian keeper Erwin Lemmens (Espanyol), Ivory Coast midfielder Yaya Toure (Metalurh Donetsk) and Euro 2004-winning defender Michalis Kapsis (Bordeaux).

Panathinaikos have landed Brazilian midfielder Flavio Conceicao from Galatasaray and Liverpool's Croatian midfielder Igor Biscan.

Lou Economopoulos

Dinamo bank on foreign stars

Foreign legionnaire...Giorgios Seitaridis is one of three Dinamo Moscow newcomers from Porto

RUSSIA

A LEAGUE RECORD was set when only five Russians appeared on the pitch during the Dinamo-Zenit St Petersburg game in Moscow in mid-July. The hosts used only two locals – midfielder Sergei Yashin and defender Denis Kolodin, a recent signing from Kryliya Sovetov Samara. Three other new arrivals were Portugal midfielders Maniche and Costinha and Greece right-back Giorgios Seitaridis, all bought from FC Porto for a combined £20million.

After the game, which Dinamo lost 2-1, club owner Alexei Fedorychev announced two more newcomers – Nigeria defender Joseph Enakarhire and, probably the most important summer signing, Brazilian coach Ivo Vortmann, recommended by Luiz Felipe Scolari. The 55-year-old replaces Andrei Kobelev, who has led Dinamo since Oleg Romantsev's resignation earlier this year.

Fedorychev has said he is willing to spend even more money before the transfer window closes at the end of August in his bid to restore Dinamo to former glories. They were at one time Russia's best team, but have not won a full-season championship since 1963 and were 15 points adrift of leaders and reigning champions Lokomotiv Moscow in the current campaign at the halfway stage.

Lokomotiv have also made a number of quality signings ahead of their Champions League campaign, including 22-year-old Parma forward Francesco Ruopolo and Estonia wing-back Dmitri Kruglov from Levadia Tallinn. Lokomotiv remained unbeaten after 17 rounds and led second-placed Zenit by 11 points.

Victor Gusev

POLAND

Liczka sacked after winning title

Wisla Krakow owner Boguslaw Cupial was not in celebratory mood despite his side winning their third successive League title. Instead, he fired coach Werner Liczka after just six months in charge, blaming him for a humiliating 5-1 League defeat at Legia Warsaw during the run-in and Wisla's Cup semi-final defeat by Zaglebie Lubin.

Liczka's replacement is former national team coach Jerzy Engel. The 52-year-old is charged with the task of getting Wisla into the Champions League group stage for the first time, but he will have to do it without the club's top striker, Maciej Zurawski, who has signed for Celtic.

The Glasgow club signed another Pole, Artur Boruc from Legia, who also sold Marek Saganowski to Portugal's Vitoria Guimaraes.

Six referees, an FA official and the vice-chairman of Second Division Piast Gliwice have been arrested during a police investigation of alleged match-fixing.

Dariusz Kurowski

SLOVAKIA

Sebo leaves hole up front

Artmedia Petrzalka, who clinched their first League title in June, started their defence just a month later but without top striker Filip Sebo. The 21-year-old hit 22 goals last term to finish League top scorer, a performance that prompted Austria Wien to swoop for him within days of the season's end. Sebo's absence was felt immediately as Artmedia laboured up front on the opening day of the new campaign, losing 2-0 at home to modest Spartak Trnava.

Inter Bratislava, who avoided relegation by the narrowest of margins last season, opened brightly with a 2-1 win at Ruzomberok. Promoted Nitra got off to a flying start when outclassing championship favourites MSK Zilina 5-2 away.

Pavol Stracansky

ROMANIA

Protasov takes Steaua reins

Champions Steaua Bucharest have appointed Ukrainian coach Oleg Protasov to lead them into the new season having sacked Italian Walter Zenga as they stumbled during the title run-in. Protasov, who has signed a one-year deal, led Olympiakos to the Greek title in 2003.

However, Steaua are now without veteran midfielder Dorinel Munteanu, who has joined CFR Cluj as player-coach. The 36-year-old, a member of Romania's 1994 World Cup squad, helped Cluj to a notable victory over Athletic Bilbao in the InterToto Cup first round.

Politehnica Timisoara have made a number of high-profile signings as they push to become the first provincial side to win the championship since Universitatea Craiova in 1991. The new boys include defensive midfielder Adrian Olah and Australian central defender Jonathan McKain, both from National Bucharest, and defender Sorin Radoi and prolific striker Gheorghe Bucur (both Sportul Studentesc).

Former agent Giovani Becali has been appointed executive president of Cup holders and League runners-up Dinamo Bucharest.

Radu Timofte

BULGARIA

Champions sign African pair

Champions CSKA Sofia have signed two Africans – Morocco midfielder Murad Hdioued, from Litex Lovech, and Ivorian forward Dah Zadi Guillaume, from Tunisian club

football – ahead of the new League campaign. Another new arrival is Serbo-Montenegrin defender Slavko Matic, from a spell in Iran. However, captain Todor Yanchev has left for Greek side Kallithea on a free transfer after his contract expired.

Elsewhere, Lokomotiv Plovdiv have scooped two of the country's most promising youngsters, both from Pirin – national Under-21 forward Vladislav Zlatinov and midfielder Hristo Zlatiniski.

Ljubomir Petrovic has returned to take charge of Litex Lovech a year after leaving to join Red Star Belgrade. The Serb replaces Israeli Itzhak Shum, who quit after just 11 games during the spring campaign after the team failed to find any consistency.

Former national team captain Ivan Kolev has died of a heart attack, aged 75. Kolev played for Bulgaria at the 1962 World Cup, the country's first finals appearance, and won 12 League titles with CSKA Sofia (then known as CDNA).

Michael Bowesfield

HUNGARY

Debrecen add firepower

Debrecen, League title holders for the first time, signed Serbia & Montenegro striker Bojan Brnovic on loan from Partizan Belgrade on the eve of their Champions League qualifying tie with Hajduk Split. Brnovic has three caps with the senior national side and was a regular scorer for the Under-21s.

Ferencvaros look unlikely to be able to mount a serious challenge to Debrecen in the domestic League after spending the summer trying to alleviate their financial problems. Instead, Ujpest look the biggest threat to the champions.

Peterjon Cresswell

UKRAINE

Champions Shakhtar make winning start

Champions Shakhtar Donetsk won their first two games of the 2005-06 League campaign and beat arch-rivals Kyiv Dynamo on penalties in the Super Cup to justify their status as favourites for the new campaign.

Owner Rinat Akhmetov, the richest man in Ukraine, has pumped more than £30million into the club, and finally got a return as Shakhtar clinched last season's championship with a game to spare. They celebrated by beating deposed title-holders Dynamo 3-2 at home on the final day.

Experienced Romanian coach Mircea Lucescu has built a well-balanced and creative team, in which the key players are compatriot Razvan Rat in defence, Ukrainian international Anatoliy Tymoshchuk (voted the best player in the League by fellow pros) and Brazilian Matuzalem in midfield, and another Brazilian, Brandao, leading the attack.

New arrivals this summer are Turkish international defender Seyhan Tolga from Trabzonspor and Ukrainian international Vyacheslav Shevchuk from Dnipro. Nenad Lalatovich has left for Red Star Belgrade.

The Super Cup game was the first in charge for Dynamo boss Leonid Buriak, the former national team coach, who has succeeded Jozef Szabo. The latter cited his age, 66, and health reasons for stepping down.

Buriak's first signing was forward Serhii Rebrov, returning to the club after a miserable five-year spell at Tottenham and West Ham. Later, Dynamo broke the transfer record for a domestic player by signing international Ruslan Rotan for a reported £2.5m from Dnipro. As part of the deal, Belarus forward Sergei Kornilenko has gone the other way, while Dynamo have also allowed Argentinian striker Roberto Nanni to join Serie A side Siena on loan.

Other notable transfers were Georgian Levan Tskitishvili's move from Freiburg of Germany to Metalurh Donetsk, who have loaned Peruvian striker Andres Mendoza to Marseille. Dnipro forward Oleh Venhlinskyi has joined AEK Athens.

Coach Olexander Sevidov has replaced Russian Vitaliy Shevchenko at Metalurh Donetsk, Metalist have brought Miron Markevich out of retirement as a replacement for Olexander Zavarov, and veteran Victor Nosov is the new coach of Vorskla, succeeding Vladimir Muntiyan.

Oleg Zadernovsky

Let's party...Shakhtar Donetsk triumph

Sparta must mind the gaps

No go...Sparta have been knocked back in a bid for Marek Heinz

CZECH REPUBLIC

SPARTA PRAGUE coach Jaroslav Hrebik may have declared himself satisfied with his team's preparations for the new season, but it seems all is not well with the champions.

For a start, they appear to lack a cutting edge up front. Sparta have retained Czech striker Tomas Jun and signed Miroslav Slepicka from Slovan Liberec but have sold Milan Pacanda to Austria's Wacker Tirol and Michal Meduna to Turkey's Manisaspor.

Sparta's midfield also looks depleted following the departure of Petr Vorisek to Austrian side Pasching and the end of the loan spell of Moscow Spartak's Ales Urbanek. Slovak international Karol Kisel has signed from Liberec but a second attempt to lure Marek Heinz from Borussia Monchengladbach has failed. "Heinz will definitely not go," said Gladbach official Peter Pander. "Sparta don't have the money."

The news that mercurial playmaker Jan Simak is being treated for alcohol problems has hardly helped preparations, though Hrebik has managed to strengthen his defence by signing Liberec's Petr Lukas, Banik Ostrava's Zdenek Pospech and Adam Petrous from Russian side Rubin Kazan.

Across town, Slavia are still beset by financial problems and have lost several key players. Veteran forward Pavel Kuka has retired, midfielder Radek Bejbl has moved to Rapid Wien and midfield star Vaclav Kolousek may quit in a dispute over unpaid wages.

Drnovice will compete in the Second Division next season, having failed to receive a top-flight licence. Their demotion means Viktoria Plzen, who finished third in the Second Division, go up, along with SIAD Most and Vysocina Jihlava.

Financial problems at relegated Opava mean they will miss the 2005-06 season as their new owners try to balance the books.

Sam Beckwith

Sao Paulo win with spirit

LIBERTADORES CUP FINAL

Glory day...the ticker tape streams down as Sao Paulo keeper Rogerio Ceni hoists the Libertadores Cup surrounded by his team-mates

FOR THE FIRST time in its 46-year history the Libertadores Cup threw up a Final between two clubs from the same country. But such a conclusion, only possible since the competition was expanded in 2000, turned out to be an unequal struggle. Sao Paulo's 5-1 aggregate win over fellow Brazilians Atletico Paranaense equalled the widest victory margin in a Libertadores Final.

The outcome was no surprise. These were teams in contrasting stages of development. Sao Paulo were settled and rich in resources, from talismanic keeper Rogerio Ceni, through a solid back three commanded by the combative Diego Lugano, the fast and dangerous wing-backs Cicinho and Junior, a midfield blending the lung power of Josue and Mineiro with the unhurried elegance of Danilo, to the experienced strikeforce of Luizao and Amoroso.

The latter, brought back from Europe to replace the injured Grafite, had no problems establishing a relationship with his partner since the pair made their names together with Guarani back in 1994.

In personnel, formation and philosophy the Sao Paulo side were very similar to the one that reached last year's semi-finals. In contrast, Atletico Paranaense found themselves in a very different situation. The side that nearly won the Brazilian championship last December had been dismantled, and the new team struggled to gel. They contested the Libertadores title while lying bottom of the domestic League table, having gone through three coaches during the first couple of months of the campaign.

The third coach, veteran Antonio Lopes, managed to get Atletico organised in typical haranguing style. They were physically strong, marked tight and worked hard. But in truth they were a very limited team who surprised themselves in reaching the Final, and used a decade's ration of luck in order to get there. Then fortune went hiding.

The club's stadium is well short of the 40,000 capacity required for the Final. With no other ground in Curitiba available, they had to stage their home leg hundreds of miles further south in Porto Alegre – where on a wet, bitterly cold night there was nothing to warm the soul.

The first leg was contemporary Brazilian football at its worst, little more than a cynical, small-minded succession of stoppages. There were over 60 fouls, and a less lenient referee would have blown for more. In between the whistle blasts Atletico scored from a moment that typified their campaign; a sharp tackle in midfield, a quick break, a cross from

the right – the source of so many of their goals – and a thumping header from Aloisio, one of their two gangling strikers.

Atletico then provided the last three touches on Sao Paulo's comical equaliser. Back helping out in his own area, Aloisio inadvertently flicked on a free-kick, keeper Diego clawed the ball away but only on to the head of defender Durval and over the line.

The second leg in Sao Paulo could only be better, but took 17 minutes to prove it. Then the hosts at last came up with a moment of quality, a superbly skilful and imaginative exchange of passes between Danilo and Luizao. It created space for Danilo's shot, which was spilled by the keeper, hooked across the face of the goal by the defence but only on to the head of Amoroso, who nodded home.

That looked like the start of Sao Paulo's victory parade, but, out of the blue, on the stroke of half-time, Atletico were presented with an opportunity to draw level when Aloisio was held back by Alex. The foul took place outside the area, but the referee pointed to the spot. It made no difference. Fabricio rolled his left-foot shot against a post.

It was Atletico's first chance – and their last. Soon after the break Sao Paulo doubled their lead when Fabao headed home powerfully from a corner. An Amoroso burst and cross was turned in at the far post by an offside-looking Luizao, the top Brazilian marksman in Libertadores history. His goal also meant that he finished the campaign as Sao Paulo's joint top scorer, level with the remarkable Rogerio. The crowd hoped that the keeper might have an opportunity to add to his account with a late free-kick, but it never came. Instead, substitute Diego Tardelli completed the rout with a craftily-taken fourth.

The title, then, was back in Brazil for the first time since 1999, and it had gone to the right team. Defeated just once in 14 games, scoring 34 goals and conceding 14, Sao Paulo showed solidity, spirit, speed and the occasional flash of flair – enough to be worthy champions.

Oh yes...Sao Paulo score in the first leg

Battle...Guadalajara's Francisco Palencia holds off Fabian Vargas on Boca's night of shame in Buenos Aires

LIBERTADORES CUP QUARTER-FINALS AND SEMIS

PRE-TOURNAMENT FAVOURITES Santos and Boca Juniors ended up in the same half of the draw, and an epic semi-final encounter was anticipated. But both fell a round earlier.

Boca looked past their sell-by date, but they had their moments. At times the passing and movement of their midfield quartet was a delight. But in the quarter-final against Guadalajara, coach Jorge Benitez made a mess of selection – too few strikers in the away, first leg, too many at home. With the aid of some inspired long-range shooting the adventurous Mexicans won 4-0 at home and held on 0-0 in Buenos Aires, on a night when disgraceful behaviour by Boca fans, players and the coach forced the game to be abandoned when it became clear that their team were out.

Santos, meanwhile, defended poorly throughout, but the attacking brilliance of Robinho papered over the cracks. However, he was called up for the Confederations Cup, along with left-back Leo, and missed the second leg of the all-Brazilian quarter-final against Atletico Paranaense. Without him, Santos, already 3-2 behind from the away, first leg, fell apart in the return, losing 2-0.

The Confederations Cup also gave Atletico a boost in the semi-final, since opponents Guadalajara had half their side in Germany. To cap it all, attacking fulcrum Adolfo Bautista was suspended, having been sent off against Boca.

In the first leg, in Curitiba, Guadalajara's reserves were hustled out of their stride and lost 3-0. In an extraordinary attempt to pull back the deficit, they flew their stars back for the second leg, and just a day after Mexico's third-place match in Germany, which went to extra-time, they were in action on the other side of the Atlantic.

It could have worked. Guadalajara went ahead after 25 minutes and had they scored a second before half-time would have been well placed. But, inevitably, they ran out of steam, and Atletico went through with a 2-2 draw.

The other half of the draw threw up the expected semi-final between River Plate and Sao Paulo, although River endured awkward moments in their quarter-final against fellow Argentinians Banfield, who enjoyed an excellent debut campaign. In a tie with a dismal first leg and an explosive second, Banfield pushed River all the way. Diego Cevallos' last-minute effort would have put Banfield through on away goals had it not crept agonisingly past a post, and River progressed 4-3 on aggregate.

Sao Paulo reached the semi-finals more comfortably, against Tigres of Mexico. True, they suffered their only defeat of the campaign, 2-1 in Monterrey, but were already virtually assured of qualifying having won the first leg 4-0.

For half an hour of the home leg Sao Paulo were second best. But then inspirational keeper Rogerio Ceni opened the scoring with one of his superb free-kicks, and it was a different game. With their speed on the flanks Sao Paulo tormented Tigres' back three, and the chances flowed. Rogerio scored again, from another free-kick, and it hardly mattered when he later skied a penalty over the bar.

He was on target from the spot in more important circumstances – the 88th minute of the first leg of the semi-final, when his fifth goal of the competition sealed a 2-0 home win over River in the tie dubbed the early final.

Underestimating the implications of the away goals rule, River had come for a scoreless draw. It was not a smart move. Defence was not their strong suit, with keeper Franco Costanzo unconvincing and the centre-back duo of Horacio Ameli and Eduardo Tuzzio not on speaking terms.

River paid the price in the closing stages. Unable or unwilling to retain possession, the cracks opened up. Danilo put Sao Paulo ahead after 77 minutes and Rogerio's penalty gave them a strong foundation for the return.

Danilo headed a crucial away goal early in Buenos Aires, leaving River needing to score at least four times. They managed one, on 36 minutes, and pegged Sao Paulo back to the despair of the visitors' coach, Paulo Autuori, who bellowed for them to push forward. Just before the hour the Brazilians finally unleashed a counter-attack, neatly rounded off by Amoroso to put the result beyond doubt, and they duly held on, winning 3-2 on the night.

Tim Vickery

Velez enjoy home-grown success

ARGENTINA

VELEZ SARSFIELD'S closing championship triumph is a vindication of their "home-grown" policy, which is now a rarity among top-level Argentinian clubs.

While the other leading sides wheel and deal frantically during the close season, Velez have built a reputation as the club that do least business in the transfer market and make fewest team changes from one tournament to the next.

They manage this by promoting from their youth teams – nine of the championship-winning team came up through the ranks, while no fewer than 27 of the 32-man professional squad are home-grown.

Velez had shown their promise by finishing runners-up to Newell's Old Boys in the opening championship last December, but they went one better in the recent campaign to secure their first title in seven years.

"This is a club model which has been successful, on the field and economically," says club president Raul Gamez, tipped to succeed Julio Grondona as FA president. "We have done things right and don't care what people think when we take decisions."

The latter comment refers to the widespread criticism of the board from the fans after Velez allowed strikers Cristian Bardaro and Lucas Valdemarin to leave after the opening campaign. The criticism seemed justified after Velez failed to score in their first three closing games, but they hit 32 goals in the remaining 16 to finish six points clear of Banfield.

Not only that, but Velez had the League's best defence – just 14 goals conceded – and keeper Gaston Sessa was hailed as the best in the country.

The team also reaped the rewards of switching former Lazio player Lucas Castroman from midfield to attack. But the side's biggest strength has been their midfield, orchestrated by Leandro Gracian, who is being eyed by a number of foreign clubs.

Velez have also benefited from some shrewd decisions off the field. When coach Carlos Ischia resigned last year, there was no rush to sign a big-name replacement. Instead, youth team boss Alberto Fanesi, who naturally knew nearly all the players well, took over for the rest of the season. He then moved back to the juniors when Miguel Russo was engaged.

Velez have long called themselves one of Argentina's "big six", a fact disputed by other clubs. But it is now undeniable in terms of titles won – the closing was their sixth championship, taking them into clear sixth place in the national rankings – while their stadium and facilities have always been top bracket.

Now the club's main problem is how to avoid becoming a victim of their own success. Defender Fabricio Fuentes has joined Mexican side Atlas, and other departures seem likely.

There is no dispute about the country's Big Two, but River Plate's 10th-place finish and Boca Juniors' showing, even lower, in 15th, gave the final table an unfamiliar look.

Neither managed to successfully juggle domestic and Libertadores Cup campaigns; indeed, Boca performed so poorly at home in what was their centenary season that they will miss out on the 2006 Libertadores. River scraped in only by beating already-relegated Huracan 1-0 on the final day (qualification for non-champions is based on combined opening and closing points totals).

If River had not made it, there would have been hell to pay, since Estudiantes and Rosario Central played out a very convenient 1-1 draw on the last day to both qualify, along with the two tournament winners, Newell's and Velez.

Boca's season ended in ignominy, losing 3-2 to Almagro, the other relegated side, with the game abandoned 26 minutes from time when angry fans from both camps invaded the pitch. Boca had fielded a team of juniors since they had already sent senior players on holiday or terminated their contracts.

Runners-up Banfield were the revelations of the season, also reaching the Libertadores quarter-finals (where they were knocked out by River) without the luxury of having a big squad.

But they will struggle to repeat such a showing next season, since the team has virtually broken up as a result of transfers and loan deals.

The 20 top division clubs used no fewer than 50 coaches during the season, with only two retaining the same boss throughout – River Plate (Leonel Astrada) and Arsenal (Jorge Burruchaga). Even Burruchaga has now moved on, leaving Astrada as the last man standing.

Boca have made some headway in strengthening their squad, bringing in defenders Daniel Diaz (Colon) and Hugo Ibarra (returned from Monaco), midfielders Federico Insua (Independiente), Sebastian Battaglia (back from Villarreal) and Daniel Bilos (Banfield), plus striker Guillermo Marino (Newell's). Meanwhile, River have once again been selling their best players – midfielders Javier Mascherano (Corinthians) and Luis Gonzalez (Porto) – while none of the five acquisitions to date look close to being of the same quality.

Eric Weil

Goal difference...Lucas Castroman's switch from Velez's midfield to attack proved a masterstroke

Hero and villain…Sebastian Abreu's controversial winner against Rocha infuriated Defensor

Defensor cede title in protest

URUGUAY

NACIONAL WERE HANDED the 2005 "transitional" championship by default after Defensor Sporting refused to take part in a two-leg play-off decider in protest at a refereeing decision that helped Nacional qualify.

Nacional beat Rocha 3-2 with a controversial penalty in the fifth minute of injury-time to finish level on points with Defensor at the end of the championship proper. As goal difference is not used to settle the title, a play-off was ordered.

Defensor's players, who had just beaten Cerrito 1-0, were waiting on the pitch to celebrate the title when Sebastian Abreu scored Nacional's hotly-disputed third goal, having won the penalty himself. The Violets said they were tired of seeing the Big Two – Nacional and Penarol – benefit from dubious refereeing decisions, a common complaint among the smaller clubs.

"We hope this will be the catalyst for profound changes in Uruguayan football which will allow it to regain the credibility it has lost today," said the club in a statement.

To be fair to the referee, Gustavo Mendez, who left the country after the game because of death threats, he had awarded Rocha a penalty in the 88th minute. But that was saved by Sebastian Viera.

Nacional, meanwhile, were unrepentant and organised a celebratory game against an all-time Nacional XI at their Parque Central stadium to replace the play-off. During the 5-5 draw, Abreu even recreated the penalty incident with the help of an opponent but this time, curiously, the referee waved play on. At the end of all this, Nacional were presented with the trophy and completed a lap of honour to the background of a fireworks display.

The transitional tournament was introduced since Uruguay is moving from a calendar-year season to a Europe-style August-June season.

Penarol's Uruguayan internationals Carlos Bueno and Cristian Rodriguez have announced they are joining Paris Saint-Germain. The players have been idle for four months after Penarol declared them to be "rebelling" following their refusal to accept a pay-rise offer. The pair, both represented by the Casal Group, who are agents for a huge number of Uruguayan players and also hold television rights for the local championship, have said they will let their agents resolve the matter with Penarol. FIFA may also be asked to intervene.

Brian Homewood

CHILE

Colo Colo float to tackle debt

Colo Colo, the country's most popular club, have become the first in the Americas to offer shares on the stock market. Trading began on June 24, when Blanco y Negro (Black and White), the newly-formed company that has a 30-year concession to manage Colo Colo, raised £17.81million in the initial offering.

The 80-year-old club were declared bankrupt at the beginning of 2002 after years of overspending on players and salaries. Blanco y Negro, formed in March by potential investors, plans to use the proceeds of the share offer to pay off the debts, estimated at £11m, and finance a £5m remodelling of the club's Monumental stadium.

Colo Colo, named after a legendary Indian warrior who fought the Spaniards during the Conquest, are the only Chilean team to have won the Libertadores Cup, in 1991. The coach of that team, Serb Mirko Joric, has been appointed technical director, with Ricardo Dabrowski, one of the Libertadores-winning players, handed the coaching reins.

There was less happy news on the pitch, where Colo Colo were knocked out of the opening championship at the quarter-final stage by modest Huachipato.

Union Espanola beat Coquimbo Unido, Huachipato's semi-final conquerers, 4-2 on aggregate in the Final to take their first championship since 1977. Veteran former international midfielder Jose Luis Sierra was Union's inspiration and fittingly scored, a late penalty, as they won the second leg 3-2.

The closing championship, scheduled to kick off just a week later, was nearly prevented from starting by a players' strike. The players' union, SIFUP, claimed the clubs owed them about £540,000 in unpaid wages and bonuses.

It backed down 24 hours before the scheduled first game when the First and Second Division clubs agreed to pay up by the end of the year and also promised to kick out any of their members who did not abide by the agreement, surprising even the players.

"We never thought the clubs who have respected the agreement would vote to throw out the ones who didn't," said SIFUP president Carlos Soto.

Brian Homewood

COLOMBIA

Atletico finally get it right

Atletico Nacional, beaten in the Final of both championships played last year, made no mistake this time as they beat Independiente Santa Fe to win the opening title.

Despite missing six players through suspension, as well as injured strikers Victor Aristizabal and Edixon Perea, Atletico won the second leg 2-0 at home, having held out for a goalless draw in the first match.

Carlos Alberto Diaz scrambled home the opening goal in the 80th minute, and stand-in striker Oscar Echeverry added the second two minutes later to give Atletico their first championship since 1999.

Shortly afterwards, 21-year-old Perea, already a national team regular, was sold to Bordeaux.

Brian Homewood

BOLIVIA

Bolivar enjoy transition

Bolivar won the transitional tournament with two games to spare, despite losing 2-1 to bitter rivals The Strongest in the third from last round.

Final battle…Atletico (stripes) v Independiente

Second-placed Oriente Petrolero, the only side that could have caught them, could manage only a 1-1 draw at home to lowly Destroyers, leaving Bolivar seven points clear.

There was also the usual fun and games with strikes and strike threats at several clubs, while the country's political crisis forced the contest to be halted altogether at one stage, with a three-week hiatus.

Brian Homewood

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Last bow...Guy Stephan salutes the fans after Senegal's 2-2 home draw with Togo but was later sacked

Senegal trio take the fall

WEST AFRICA

● SENEGAL'S French coach, Guy Stephan, the minister of sport and the FA president were all victims of a putsch after the country's World Cup qualifying setback against Togo. The trio were fired after the 2-2 draw in Dakar, which hit Senegal's hopes of qualifying for Germany 2006.

● Emmanuel Osei Ansah, coach of GHANAIAN champions Hearts of Oak, died after suffering a heart attack during his side's 1-0 League win over Liberty Professionals in early June. The 52-year-old, a former Ghanaian international, took over only in April after Hearts had lost their first game of the season and went on to oversee a run of five wins in seven games that put them top of the table. Ansah had previously been Hearts' assistant coach for nine years, during which the club won the 2000 African Champions League. He also spent 13 years of his playing career at Hearts.

● Philippe Troussier has pulled out of coaching NIGERIA, for what would have been the second time, having apparently agreed to the deal. He cited medical reasons for his decision.

● Three GUINEA players – Lansana Conde, Ibrahima Camara and goalkeeper Abdoulaye Soumah – disappeared from the team hotel after the World Cup qualifying defeat in Tunisia in mid-June. The trio, who are all with champions Fello Star Labe, are thought to be seeking contracts with clubs in Algeria and France.

● Rail Club Kadiogo won the League title in BURKINA FASO for the first time.

● In TOGO, the Super League crown went again to AS Douanes, who finished five points ahead of Dyto Lome.

● Salif Keita, the first winner of the African Footballer of the Year award, has been elected president of the MALI federation.

● French coach Serge Deveze has ended his spell at the helm of BENIN.

CENTRAL AFRICA

● Mbuta Mbala, who plays his club football for Hapoel Tel Aviv in Israel, has been named DR CONGO'S Footballer of the Year.

EAST AFRICA

● Simba SC won the East and Central African Club Challenge Cup for the second year running, beating fellow TANZANIANS Young Africans 2-0 in the Final in Mwanza. Emmanuel Gabriel and Hassan Musa Mgosi were on target. Tusker FC of Kenya finished third, beating SC Villa of Uganda.

● St George, coached by Serb Milutin Sredejovic, won a record 20th League title in ETHIOPIA, finishing 18 points clear of Trans Ethiopia. Awassa City won the Cup, beating Mugher Cement on penalties after a 2-2 draw, despite having two players sent off during regulation time. St George's Degu Debebe was named Footballer of the Year.

NORTH AFRICA

● Raja Casablanca were dethroned as champions of MOROCCO on the last day of the season, losing at home to Royal Armed Forces, who won the title instead. Raja needed only a draw but the army club scored a surprise 2-0 win to take the crown by two points. Raja have named Alexandre Moldovan as the replacement for coach Henri Stambouli, who left after the championship debacle.

● Veteran German coach Otto Pfister has returned to EGYPT to take charge of Al Masry. The former national coach of Zaire and Ghana took Zamalek to the African Cup-winners Cup title in 2000 during a previous spell in the country. Ismaili's Mohamed Sobhi has been suspended from future Arab Champions League encounters after an altercation with a referee. Ghanaian Akouti Mensah has joined champions Al Ahly. ENPPI beat Al Ittihad 1-0 in the Cup Final.

● CS Sfaxien won their first TUNISIAN championship for over a decade, pipping Etoile Sahel on goal difference. ES Zarzis won the Cup, their first trophy, with a surprise 2-0 win over Esperance in the Final. Youssef Zouaoui, a former national team coach, has taken the reins at Club Africain, while another ex-Tunisia boss, Faouzi Benzerti, is now in charge at AS Marsa.

● Ali Fergani has ended his second spell as ALGERIA coach after a 2-2 home draw with Zimbabwe ended their hopes of qualifying for next year's World Cup. ASO Chlef beat Third Division USM Setif in the Cup Final thanks to Mohamed Messaoud's goal in extra-time. Former France midfielder Dominique Bathenay is the new coach of JS Kabylie, replacing compatriot Christian Coste.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

● MALAWI fired coach Yasin Osman after just nine months following back-to-back World Cup qualifying defeats by Morocco and Botswana.

● Civics have won the NAMIBIAN Premier League title for the first time.

● German Ernst Middendorp has been named as coach of SOUTH AFRICAN champions Kaizer Chiefs, replacing veteran Romanian Ted Dumitru, who has retired after winning two successive League titles. Roger de Sa has taken over at Cape Town club Santos, while Frenchman Jean Yves Kerjean returns to South Africa as coach of Black Leopards. Serbia-born Pal Dolezar has taken the reins at Bloemfontein Celtic.

Mark Gleeson

Award...DR Congo's Mbuta Mbala

Reluctant warrior...Oleg Pachinin (in blue) will need persuading by new coach Bobby Houghton to return to the Uzbekistan squad for the crucial clash with Kuwait

Battle on for play-off place

ASIAN WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

THE JOCKEYING FOR position has begun as Kuwait and Uzbekistan battle to keep their World Cup hopes alive. Both nations hired new coaches weeks before their clash in Tashkent on August 17 which will determine who finishes third in Group A to gain entry to the Asian play-off against Group B equivalents Bahrain.

Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Iran and Japan have already secured Asia's four automatic berths at Germany 2006; the winner of the Asian play-off will meet the fourth-placed CONCACAF team for a place in the finals.

The Uzbeks, who trail Kuwait by two points and must therefore beat them, appointed former China boss Bobby Houghton as caretaker. The 58-year-old Englishman, who also guided Malmo to the European Cup Final in 1979, has had little time to assess his squad and his toughest task will be convincing key Lokomotiv Moscow pair Vladimir Maminov and Oleg Pachinin to return to the side after both cried off for the last game against the Saudis in June, which Uzbekistan lost 3-0.

That defeat spelled the end for Houghton's predecessor, Ravshan Haydarov, who himself had replaced German Hans Jurgen Gede after the Uzbeks took only one point from their first three games.

The Kuwaitis have suffered terrible instability in recent weeks after pulling the plug on the appointment of former Slovenia coach Srecko Katanec at the last minute. Katanec had been lined up as a replacement for Mohammed Ibrahim, but Kuwait spiked the move because they claimed he had been simultaneously negotiating to become national coach of the United Arab Emirates.

After relaunching their search, the Kuwaitis appointed Romanian Mihai Stoichita, who resigned from club side Otelul Galati to take up the position.

Ibrahim led Kuwait through the first phase of World Cup qualifiers in 2004 and had returned to the helm, replacing ousted Serb Slobodan Pavkovic, before himself being dispensed with in June after a 4-0 home defeat by South Korea.

Meanwhile, Katanec did not get the UAE job either, since Dutchman Dick Advocaat has now been appointed. The 57-year-old former Holland and Rangers boss, who has signed a one-year contract, replaces compatriot Aad De Mos.

Michael Church

Net profit...Araujo celebrates another goal for Gamba Osaka

Goals galore for Gamba pair

JAPAN

THE PROLIFIC STRIKEFORCE of Brazilian Araujo and Masashi Oguro has been the toast of Osaka, as their goals fired Gamba to within four points of leaders Kashima Antlers at the J.League's halfway stage.

Araujo, signed from Shimizu S-Pulse at the start of the season, was League top scorer with 15 goals from 17 games, while Oguro, who has also been finding the net for the national side, was three behind him.

Gamba's 7-1 thrashing of Emperor's Cup holders Tokyo Verdy 1969 put the writing on the wall for coach Ossie Ardiles, who was fired after Verdy suffered two further heavy defeats – 7-0 to Urawa Reds and 6-0 to Jubilo Iwata.

There was also a painful end to Emerson Leao's very brief spell at Vissel Kobe. He left after just four League games in charge with the side still bottom of the table and on the back of four straight losses in the League Cup. The Brazilian's replacement is Pavel Rehak, the former Slavia Prague forward who played in Japan for JEF United Ichihara, Consadole Sapporo and Yokohama FC.

Yokohama F Marinos kept their hopes for a hat-trick of titles alive by beating leaders Antlers 2-1 at home in early July. Marinos lost out-of-contract South Korea striker Ahn Jung-hwan to Metz, but signed Brazilian midfielder Magrao from Palmeiras.

Urawa Reds released Turkish World Cup defender Alpay after he was sent off for the third time in seven League games. They also got rid of Emerson, the J.League's top scorer last season, to Qatari side Al Sadd after he failed to return from a holiday in his native Brazil. The reported fee of £4.6million is a record for a player moving from Japan. Meanwhile, Reds signed Bayer Leverkusen's Brazilian/Italian midfielder Robson Ponte.

Japan midfielder Toshiya Fujita moved from Jubilo Iwata to Nagoya Grampus Eight, while three South American strikers arrived in the country: Brazilian Reinaldo to Kashiwa Reysol on loan from PSG; Gil (Corinthians) to Tokyo Verdy 1969; and Paraguayan Santiago Salcedo (Cerro Porteno) to FC Tokyo.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

Hiddink takes the helm

OCEANIA

● GUUS HIDDINK has agreed to take charge of the AUSTRALIAN national team for the remainder of their World Cup qualifying campaign, and will stay in the post as long as they reach the finals in Germany. The 58-year-old, who remains coach of Dutch champions PSV Eindhoven, faces his first Socceroos games in September, home and away against Solomon Islands to determine who meets the fifth-placed South American team for a World Cup finals berth.

Hiddink, who led South Korea to an unprecedented fourth-place finish at the last World Cup, replaces Frank Farina, dismissed after Australia lost all three group games at the Confederations Cup. Farina, capped 37 times as a player, had been on thin ice since May when federation CEO John O'Neill ordered him to attend an anger management course following a heated confrontation with television journalist Andrew Orsatti.

● Sydney FC gained a ticket for December's FIFA Club World Championship with a routine 2-0 victory over Magenta of New Caledonia in the OCEANIA CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL in Papeete, Tahiti. Australia's representatives, playing in only their eighth competitive game since foundation, won on goals from Matthew Bingley and David Zdrilic. The Player of the Tournament accolade went to Sydney defender Iain Fyfe, who has just returned home to Australia after a spell with Hamilton in Scotland.

Sydney defeated Vanuatu side Tafea 6-0 in the semi-finals and won all three group games – against Auckland City of New Zealand, Sobou (Papua New Guinea) and Pirae (Tahiti).

● Small-town FIJIAN club Navua won only their second major trophy when defeating Rewa 1-0 in the Battle of the Giants tournament Final. Although Rewa had won the competition for the past two years, Navua, the 2003 FA Cup winners, started as favourites, having recruited several prominent players both locally and from Australia and New Zealand. Captain Lorima Dau headed the winner in the second half.

Paul Moon

Captain at the bridge...Guus Hiddink

ASIAN ROUND-UP

● Former France captain Marcel Desailly has left QATARI champions Al Gharafah to join Qatar Sports Club, who now have Belgian coach Dimitri Davidovic at the helm. Davidovic led Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad to the Asian Cup-winners Cup in 1999. Costa Rican international Paulo Wanchope has joined Al Gharafah from Malaga.

● OMAN international Ali Al-Habsi is in line to become the first Asian goalkeeper in the English Premiership after signing for Bolton. However, the 24-year-old will not join them until January.

● In SAUDI ARABIA, champions Al Hilal beat Al Shabab 1-0 in the King Fahd Cup Final to complete the Double. Brazilian midfielder Camacho scored the goal from a free-kick.

● Busan I'Park, under British coach Ian Porterfield, claimed the first stage of the SOUTH KOREAN League championship with a 1-1 draw against Daejeon Citizen in the last round of matches. Incheon United were runners-up.

● Dalian Shide, going for their eighth domestic crown, moved 10 points clear at the top of the CHINESE Super League after a 5-0 demolition of Liaoning – Zou Jie scored a hat-trick – in the 15th round of matches. Wuhan Huanghelou were lying second, with Shanghai Shenhua third.

Michael Church & Azam Mahmood

Dancing to the agents' tune

Harry Kewell's recent court case has shed light on a dark corner of the game, says David Conn

PERHAPS WE SHOULD rename the close season. After all, it's a time to dance – a few weeks in which admired players at top clubs, with a year or two left on their contracts, are sent out by their agents to parade seductively on the edge of the transfer window.

Take Steven Gerrard, caught on the pitch in the full ecstatic flush of Liverpool's outlandish Champions League victory, telling the world: "How could I move after this?" You could almost hear his agent choking on the champagne.

Just five weeks later, things had changed. Gerrard said the club had sorely, somehow, disappointed him, and he'd made the regretful decision to leave after all. Pain, sorrow and loads of money – the fundamental steps of the summer dance.

Then there are the clubs' moves, insisting to their fans they are doing everything they can to keep the player – which, in Liverpool's case, did appear reasonably true. It was never clear exactly what Gerrard's sticking points were, and somewhat shockingly, he very quickly travelled from being every boy's hero to the subject of "Judas" graffiti on the Anfield walls.

Then Gerrard changed his mind again; he was staying. It had, he said, been incredibly difficult, heart-rending, gut-wrenching, the past six weeks had been the worst of his life. Poor lad, and all he had to show for it was a new contract paying him £100,000 a week.

Next up in the parade, Shaun Wright-Phillips. This move was so long trailed that the participants came over rather half-hearted, going through their allotted roles. First, the nation was prepared with the idea that Chelsea were interested; Manchester City fans, via their local newspaper, given musings on whom manager Stuart Pearce might sign with half the money City were to get. Then proud City made it clear they didn't want to sell him despite debts of £100million or so, which they had run up even though they were handed a new 48,000-seat stadium in 2003 on remarkably favourable terms by Manchester's local authority.

Shaun popped up to say he wanted to stay anyway – but then, oops, we were told he'd "asked to speak" to Chelsea. City – or, the papers said, "club officials privately" – were furious. It was only with the profoundest regret and through a fog of rage they could even bring themselves to bank the £21m for a kid they signed for nothing. John Wardle, City's chairman, we heard, conducted negotiations from his private yacht – how lovely for him.

The reality behind these public shows, the murk behind the window, rarely comes to light. What were the players' agents doing? Were they angling for the players to move? Talking to one or both clubs? Were they truly looking after their player's interests? Did the players really want to go or stay? And, whichever it was, why? What were they – and the clubs – really weighing up during the process? And how did they conduct the deals?

Adjournment...Kewell's manager Bernie Mandic leaves the High Court during the libel case

We hardly ever find out, and that is why we must treasure the occasions when, due to whatever fallout, the occasional deal ends up in court. There, usually with an unshakeable conviction that what they did was in all respects flawless, players, agents, sometimes club executives, roll their stories out on oath.

Lineker sued for libel

Harry Kewell popped up in early June with a claim of libel against a national treasure, clean-cut, winsome, sometime World Cup-scoring Gary Lineker. Now a TV presenter, Lineker was defending having described Kewell's move from Leeds to Liverpool in July 2003 as "a disgrace", although, he told the court, he is now too busy to actually write his newspaper column himself.

The trial's timing was cute, coming just after Kewell's – let's be extremely careful what we say here – rather, to most independent and fair-minded neutral observers, bafflingly abysmal performance for Liverpool in the Champions League Final.

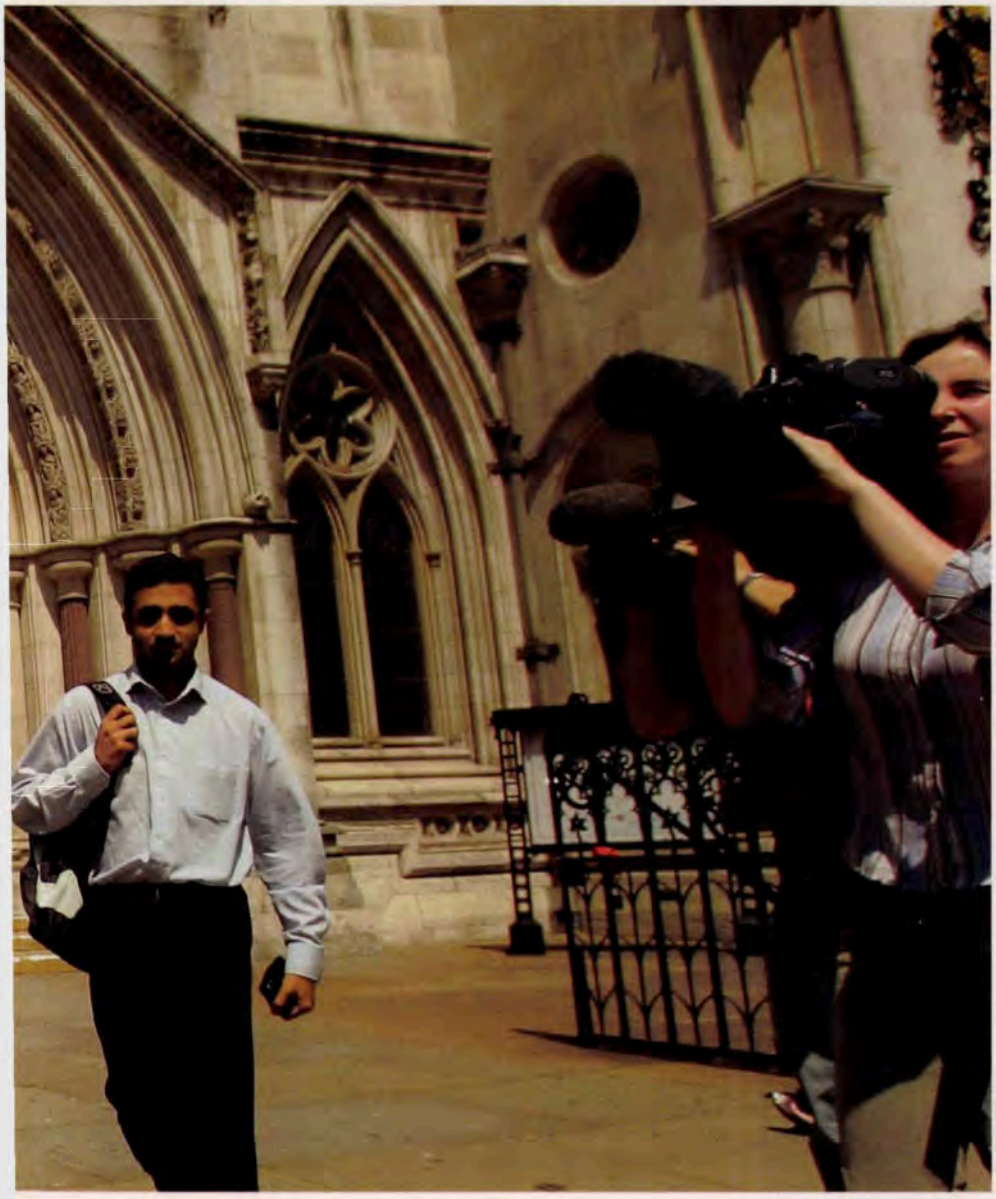
The Australian turned up in court to say he was deeply hurt by Lineker's column, which mostly criticised the £2m Kewell's personal manager – not agent, a significant difference as we'll see – Bernie Mandic was reported to have been paid by debt-stricken Leeds for getting Kewell off the wage bill.

The jury ultimately failed to reach a verdict, the parties settled on confidential terms, but the details of that are less interesting than the undisputed nuggets that emerged about the transfer. Leeds' chairman at the time was Professor John McKenzie, who had inherited the club's £100m debts after the previous chairman, Peter Ridsdale, admitted Leeds had "lived the dream" on borrowed money.

McKenzie, who famously complained about everything from Leeds' ruinous player contracts to the cost of feeding the fish in the boardroom tank, needed to sell Kewell, at the time still a hugely-rated player. Mandic told the court that calls poured in and he was able to take his pick. Eventually, Liverpool, who Kewell said were his dream team because he supported them in his boyhood, agreed to pay him £13.5m over five years. That's £2.7m a year, or, in football-speak, £52,000 a week. The Reds also chucked in £750,000 for Kewell's image rights.

Out of the £5m Liverpool paid to Leeds, Mandic was paid £2m. Mandic's brother, Nicola, was paid another £1m by Liverpool later. Mandic said the £2m was not, in fact, purely his "success fee" for doing the deal; he'd received only £600,000 for that. The other £1.4m was for work he'd done over time for Leeds, making links with clubs in Australia.

Going, staying, gone...Wright-Phillips in Chelsea kit



Mandic was asked by Lineker's lawyers whether it wasn't a conflict of interest, him being paid so much by Leeds. Surely this meant there was less for his client? No, he said: "Harry wouldn't want me working for nothing" – a truly great line.

Some knotty detail emerged. Mandic is not a licensed FIFA agent, hence the personal manager title, and the reports that Leeds, at least, had dealt directly with him, which is against the rules, led the FA to carry out a probe. It has since passed its findings to FIFA, which says it is formally investigating.

Clear, too, is that although we have always thought of agents representing players, it is increasingly clear they are paid directly by clubs to act as middle men, and are often paid both a "success fee" by clubs for bringing a player to them and directly by the player for negotiating the pay package. FIFA, however, has decided this is not a conflict of interest and does not contravene its regulation that an agent must act for only one party to a transfer.

But the court case's headline value was to confirm that the unseemly figures bandied about on the back pages of newspapers are accurate. Young players like Kewell and now Wright-Phillips really are paid £50,000 or £60,000 a week, home-grown galacticos like Gerrard, we can safely assume, genuinely up to £100,000. A near-bust club like Leeds really did pay Mandic £2m for services rendered. That sort of money really does get thrown around between a very few individuals at the top of English football, although we must think very carefully before daring to describe it as a disgrace.

MEDIA WATCH

Steven Gerrard's Liverpool U-turn

"Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard today woke up with the Champions League trophy in his bed and the prospect of a contract worth up to £100,000 a week to keep him at Anfield. 'We're going to sit down really soon and it's looking good,' he revealed."
The *Liverpool Echo* is quick to move to the issue of Gerrard's contract on May 26, the day after the Final

"Talks over Steven Gerrard's new contract will only begin when the squad report back for pre-season training on June 27, but Real Madrid are monitoring developments and could offer Raul in part-exchange."
The Daily Mail hints that all may not be well after all on June 7

" 'By the time I go back on June 27 hopefully I will be refreshed. It will be to Liverpool. There are talks. Something will be happening at the end of June, beginning of July. The ball is in Liverpool's court now.' "
The Daily Express quotes Gerrard, who still appears fully committed to the Reds, on June 14

Not so simply Red...Gerrard

"Gerrard, who has two years left on his contract, is due to report back with the first-team squad for training at Melwood this morning, with discussions likely to begin in the afternoon. The 25-year-old has been confused by the delay in starting talks, though his instinct is to remain at the club he has supported since his youth."
The Guardian's Dominic Fifield believes there are still doubts in the England man's mind on June 27

"Steven Gerrard's contract talks have hit crisis point after Liverpool's skipper told boss Rafa Benitez he is 'very tempted' to join Real Madrid. The England star is upset Liverpool found time to renew Didi Hamann's contract and to inform Vladimir Smicer that he could leave after the Istanbul Final, but did not open talks with him before he went on holiday to Ibiza."
Mark Irwin on the growing problem between player and club in *The Sun* on July 2

"Chelsea are ready to re-enter the race for Steven Gerrard after contract talks between him and Liverpool descended into farce. Sources close to Gerrard are furious at stories linking him with Real Madrid, which they feel have been fuelled by Benitez and Liverpool. A source close to Gerrard insisted: 'Steve does not want to leave but he feels there is a campaign building up against him which is forcing him out. Benitez's plans don't appear to include Steve.' "
The People's Paul McCarthy brings out the traditional "source" on July 3

"Gerrard, who had a serious disagreement with Benitez at training on Saturday afternoon, is known to be angry over the stance of [chief executive Rick] Parry and Benitez."
Henry Winter confirms the rift in July 4's *Daily Telegraph*

"Chelsea last night launched a British record £32million bid to sign Steven Gerrard and this time, after the dramatic collapse of his contract negotiations with Liverpool, are highly confident of getting their man. 'I don't like to talk about this,' Benitez said. 'But we tried three times last season to talk to Steve about a new deal and he always said: "We need to wait." So, OK, we wait.' "
Oliver Kay and Russell Kempson put yet another slant on things in *The Times* on July 5

" 'Steven has told us he will not accept our offer of an improved and extended contract because he wants to leave,' a Liverpool club statement read. Gerrard also issued a statement which said: 'This has been the hardest decision I have ever had to make. I fully intended to sign a new contract after the Champions League Final, but the events of the past five to six weeks have changed all that.' "
On July 5, the BBC Sport website says that Gerrard really is going to go

"Steven Gerrard has promised there will never be a doubt over his Anfield future again, after incredibly signing a new four-year contract with Liverpool last night. After a series of late-night phone calls, and agonising soul-searching, Gerrard did an astonishing U-turn and agreed to stay at the European champions until 2009 and beyond. The player was so stressed at the prospect of turning his back on his beloved Liverpool that he suffered frightening panic attacks and mild breathing and chest problems. 'Some fans will question my commitment,' he said. 'But I just couldn't go through with leaving. My heart is with Liverpool, and when I realised they really did want me, I had no choice.' "
David Maddock gets the full about-turn lowdown in July 7's *Mirror*

IT'S ALL GONE WRONG FOR...

MILAN BAROS

Not so long ago he was Liverpool's great tanned hope. The Czech striker looked like he had the skills to bring home the bacon when he was signed for £3.6m back in 2001. After a storming Euro 2004 finals, we all expected Baros to be leading the Reds' line for years to come. But Rafa Benitez came in as manager, signed Djibril Cisse and Fernando Morientes in double-quick time, and hinted Baros wasn't the apple of his eye. Now the 23-year-old could end up as just a footnote in Liverpool's illustrious history.

Out of favour...Baros

IT'S ALL GONE RIGHT FOR...

PETER CROUCH

Liverpool paid £7m for a player who his former manager Harry Redknapp reckons most people wouldn't have splashed out £700,000 on six months ago. That's some rate of inflation for the 6ft 7in former Tottenham, QPR, Portsmouth, Aston Villa, Norwich and Southampton striker, who is still only 24. Crouch won his first England cap against Colombia in May, while Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher has said he was as good as any striker in the country, bar Thierry Henry, last season – looks like Crouch has been moving up in people's estimations almost by stealth.

Upwardly mobile...Crouch

TALENT SCOUT

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

CICINHO

All-action Brazilian threatening Cafu's place

"I RUN ABOUT 13km per match," says Sao Paulo's scampering right-back Cicinho, "and there was one game when I lost 4.5kg." But it's what he does at the end of all the sweat and weight loss that is helping him make such a strong challenge for Brazil's No 2 shirt.

Cicinho has become the king of the assist – demonstrated emphatically in the Confederations Cup Final, when he had a hand in all his side's goals in the 4-1 defeat of Argentina. It won him praise worldwide and confirmed the promise he had shown at home. "Cicinho has to be first-choice," said Carlos Alberto Torres, right-back and triumphant skipper in the 1970 World Cup. "He has all the characteristics of a full-back, while Cafu doesn't know how to cross the ball."

Cafu, Brazil's captain, remains in possession with a year to go to the World Cup but there is little doubt he is now facing his stiffest challenge in a decade. After a dearth, Brazil is suddenly awash with right-backs – Maicon at Monaco, Daniel Alves at Sevilla, Rafinha of Coritiba. But Cicinho is the leading contender.

If Barcelona's Belletti had not pulled out injured from the Confederations Cup Cicinho would have started on the bench. But he has made his own luck by putting in so much hard work, which has transformed him from an athlete to a footballer who can combine pace with vision and ability to score and set up goals.

Cicinho can curl in corners and free-kicks, blast home long-range shots and work one-twos on the edge of the area. He has become a wonderful attacking full-back, though his defensive side is not quite so impressive. Sao Paulo usually field three centre-backs to give him the freedom to push forward at will. Celso Roth, his coach at former club Atletico Mineiro, confirms that "he had problems playing 4-4-2 with me. The national team will have to be patient with him."

It took the Confederations Cup to get things right. Brazil's full-backs supply attacking width, but with two centre-backs and now only two marking midfielders they have to be careful. Unsure of when to stay and when to go, Cicinho made an uncertain start. In the end, coach Carlos Alberto Parreira found the balance by making sure either Robinho or Ronaldinho kept wide and left-back Gilberto held back, leaving Cicinho freedom to break. This he did to devastating effect in the second half against Germany in the semi-final and the whole game against Argentina.

More adjustments will be needed if Cicinho is to feature at the World Cup next year. Roberto Carlos is unlikely to accept as conservative a role as that performed by Gilberto. Cicinho will have to sacrifice some of his attacking urges.

But in order to make the squad he seems willing to sacrifice what in any other year would be a certain move to Europe. Betis were very keen to take him but so far Cicinho is holding out. "I can't change the certain for the doubtful," he says. "Moving now means I would have to fight to win the prestige I have at Sao Paulo and there's also the question of adaptation. I can't be sure of a World Cup place but I've shown I'm ready to fight for it."

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club Sao Paulo
Country Brazil
Born June 24, 1980, in Pradopolis, Sao Paulo
Previous clubs Botafogo-Sao Paulo, Atletico Mineiro, Botafogo-Rio
International debut April 2005, v Guatemala
International caps 6 (0 goals)
Honours Confederations Cup 2005; Libertadores Cup 2005; Sao Paulo state championship 2005

Arnold MVUEMBA

Latest star pupil from Rennes' academy

MANY WINNERS OF the Player of the Tournament award at the Toulon Under-21 Festival have gone on to achieve full international stardom – David Ginola (1987), Alan Shearer (1991), Rui Costa (1992), Thierry Henry (1997) and Juan Roman Riquelme (1998). So no doubt the recipient of the 2005 prize, French central midfielder Arnold Mvuemba, will be hoping for a similarly bright future.

Mvuemba, born in Normandy 20 years ago to parents from the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), was easily the pick of the Toulon crop this year. He bestrid the tournament with his immense physical and technical attributes, and was the inspiration behind France's 4-1 victory over Portugal in the Final.

Whoever created Mvuemba used the template of the modern midfield all-rounder. The Rennes youngster has the stamina and strength to press and win the ball, he passes with metronomic precision, breaks purposefully forward, shoots powerfully and takes a good set-piece. Some observers have compared him to former France great Jean Tigana, and young Arnold may conceivably prove even better. Certainly he poses more of a goal threat than the 1980s star ever did.

Such precocious ability does not go unnoticed, of course, and the word is that Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger is a short neck ahead of the competition in the race to secure Mvuemba's services. However, Wenger may have to be patient.

Rennes have described the youngster as "untransferable", and Mvuemba himself has indicated that further experience in the French League is more important to him at the moment than a move abroad. It makes sense. After all, he has clocked up only 15 Ligue 1 games since making his debut for the Bretons in January 2004.

"[Rennes general manager] Pierre Dreossi has told me that he's had a number of calls about me, but he didn't want to say who," reveals Mvuemba, who is contracted to the club until 2009. "Anyway, my priority is Rennes. I'm not yet a regular for the club and want to establish myself here before thinking of leaving. There are six or seven players fighting for four places in our midfield. All my thoughts and energies are concentrated on that. Words will not give me a good run in the team. I have to earn the right through hard work."

His demanding coach, Romanian Laszlo Boloni, would appreciate those sentiments.

Rennes is certainly the place to pick up young talent these days. Not long ago the Nantes academy was by far the most productive in the west of France. Now Rennes are the market leaders, fashioning not only Mvuemba but also defenders Gregory Bourillon and Jacques Faty, midfielders Yoann Gourcuff, Jonathan Bru and Etienne Didot, and striker Jimmy Briand. Wenger probably knows all about them, too.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Rennes
Country France
Born January 28, 1985, in Alencon
Previous club Alencon
Honours Toulon Under-21 Festival 2005

Sporting Lisbon's new boy wonder

SPORTING LISBON remain the masters of panning for gold. After unearthing the likes of Paulo Futre, Luis Figo, Cristiano Ronaldo and Ricardo Quaresma, the Lions appear to have found another gem in teenage midfielder Joao Moutinho, the revelation of the Portuguese League last season.

The 18-year-old may have played for just half of the campaign – he made his League debut only in January – but what a five months it was. Moutinho won a runners-up medal in the UEFA Cup and was voted both Portugal's best newcomer and best attacking midfielder of 2004-05.

"It's just unbelievable what has happened to me," said the youngster, who left his native Algarve for the Sporting academy at the age of 14. "I had played with the pros in a pre-season tournament in Newcastle and it went well. Then I went back to the juniors and stayed there until the New Year, when coach Jose Peseiro gave me a chance with the first team. It was like a dream. I did well enough to keep my place in the side, and so my confidence grew. I must thank my team-mates and the coach. They supported and advised me throughout.

"We were tremendously disappointed to lose to CSKA Moscow in the UEFA Cup Final, especially since it was played on our home ground. We could and should have done better. But I'll always remember how we got there, too. I'll always have good memories of our victories in earlier rounds against Middlesbrough, Newcastle and AZ Alkmaar."

Given Moutinho's fine showing, it was not surprising that the Sporting management moved quickly this summer to extend his contract to 2009 and make him the subject of a £14million buy-out clause. The youngster is equally comfortable on the right side of midfield just behind the strikers or in his preferred role as the central midfield organiser, and he has an abundance of gifts: deft control, a superb range of passes, the ability to see passing opportunities far earlier than most and to glide past opponents with the ball at his feet, plus an excellent tactical feel for the game.

Moutinho, whose father Nelson was a striker with Benfica in the 1970s, is also made of the right stuff psychologically, showing he is both nerveless and assertive. Nor does he have any problem with grafting for the team.

The midfielder was a member of the Portuguese squad that won the European Under-17 Championship two years ago and is now a regular for the Under-21s. But it should be only a matter of time before he becomes a full international. The World Cup in Germany would not be a step too far for this boy wonder.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	Sporting Lisbon
Country	Portugal
Born	September 8, 1986, in Portimao
Previous club	Portimonense
Honours	European Under-17 Championship 2003

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AFRICA

5 finals berths

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Togo	8	5	2	1	14	6	17
Zambia	8	5	1	2	11	9	16
Senegal	8	4	3	1	17	8	15
Congo	8	3	1	4	8	9	10
Mali	8	1	2	5	9	11	5
Liberia	8	1	1	6	3	19	4

05.06.04 Senegal-Congo 2-0
05.06.04 Zambia-Togo 1-0
06.06.04 Liberia-Mali 1-0
19.06.04 Mali-Zambia 1-1
20.06.04 Congo-Liberia 3-0
20.06.04 Togo-Senegal 3-1
03.07.04 Senegal-Zambia 1-0
04.07.04 Congo-Mali 1-0
04.07.04 Liberia-Togo 0-0
04.09.04 Zambia-Liberia 1-0
05.09.04 Mali-Senegal 2-2
05.09.04 Togo-Congo 2-0
10.10.04 Congo-Zambia 2-3
10.10.04 Liberia-Senegal 0-3
10.10.04 Togo-Mali 1-0
26.03.05 Senegal-Liberia 6-1
26.03.05 Zambia-Congo 2-0
27.03.05 Mali-Togo 1-2
05.06.05 Congo-Senegal 0-0
05.06.05 Mali-Liberia 4-1
05.06.05 Togo-Zambia 4-1
18.06.05 Senegal-Togo 2-2
18.06.05 Zambia-Mali 2-1
19.06.05 Liberia-Congo 0-2
03.09.05 Mali-Congo
03.09.05 Zambia-Senegal
04.09.05 Togo-Liberia
07.10.05 Congo-Togo
07.10.05 Liberia-Zambia
07.10.05 Senegal-Mali

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ghana	8	4	3	1	11	4	15
South Africa	8	5	0	3	9	9	15
DR Congo	8	3	3	2	10	7	12
Cape Verde Is	8	3	1	4	7	9	10
Burkina Faso	8	3	0	5	9	10	9
Uganda	8	2	1	5	4	11	7

05.06.04 Burkina Faso-Ghana 1-0
05.06.04 South Africa-Cape Verde Is 2-1
05.06.04 Uganda-DR Congo 1-0
19.06.04 Cape Verde Is-Uganda 1-0
20.06.04 DR Congo-Burkina Faso 3-2
20.06.04 Ghana-South Africa 3-0
03.07.04 Cape Verde Is-DR Congo 1-1
03.07.04 South Africa-Burkina Faso 2-0
03.07.04 Uganda-Ghana 1-1
04.09.04 Burkina Faso-Uganda 2-0
05.09.04 DR Congo-South Africa 1-0
05.09.04 Ghana-Cape Verde Is 2-0
09.10.04 Cape Verde Is-Burkina Faso 1-0
10.10.04 Ghana-DR Congo 0-0
10.10.04 Uganda-South Africa 0-1
26.03.05 Burkina Faso-Cape Verde Is 1-2
26.03.05 South Africa-Uganda 2-1
27.03.05 DR Congo-Ghana 1-1
04.06.05 Cape Verde Is-South Africa 1-2
05.06.05 DR Congo-Uganda 4-0
05.06.05 Ghana-Burkina Faso 2-1
18.06.05 Burkina Faso-DR Congo 2-0
18.06.05 South Africa-Ghana 0-2
18.06.05 Uganda-Cape Verde Is 1-0
03.09.05 Burkina Faso-South Africa
04.09.05 DR Congo-Cape Verde Is
04.09.05 Ghana-Uganda
07.10.05 Cape Verde Is-Ghana
07.10.05 South Africa-DR Congo
07.10.05 Uganda-Burkina Faso

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	8	6	1	1	15	3	19
Cameroon	8	5	2	1	14	7	17
Egypt	8	4	1	3	21	13	13
Libya	8	3	2	3	8	9	11
Benin	7	0	2	5	7	18	2
Sudan	7	0	2	5	4	19	2

06.06.04 Cameroon-Benin 2-1
06.06.04 Ivory Coast-Libya 2-0
06.06.04 Sudan-Egypt 0-3
18.06.04 Libya-Cameroon 0-0
20.06.04 Benin-Sudan 1-1
20.06.04 Egypt-Ivory Coast 1-2
03.07.04 Sudan-Libya 0-1
04.07.04 Benin-Egypt 3-3
04.07.04 Cameroon-Ivory Coast 2-0
03.09.04 Libya-Benin 4-1
05.09.04 Egypt-Cameroon 3-2
05.09.04 Ivory Coast-Sudan 5-0
08.10.04 Libya-Egypt 2-1
09.10.04 Sudan-Cameroon 1-1
10.10.04 Benin-Ivory Coast 0-1
27.03.05 Cameroon-Sudan 2-1
27.03.05 Egypt-Libya 4-1
27.03.05 Ivory Coast-Benin 3-0
03.06.05 Libya-Ivory Coast 0-0
04.06.05 Benin-Cameroon 1-4
05.06.05 Egypt-Sudan 6-1
19.06.05 Cameroon-Libya 1-0
19.06.05 Ivory Coast-Egypt 2-0
17.08.05 Sudan-Benin
02.09.05 Libya-Sudan
04.09.05 Egypt-Benin
04.09.05 Ivory Coast-Cameroon
07.10.05 Benin-Libya
07.10.05 Cameroon-Egypt
07.10.05 Sudan-Ivory Coast

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Angola	8	4	3	1	8	6	15
Nigeria	8	4	3	1	11	4	15
Zimbabwe	8	3	3	2	9	8	12
Gabon	8	2	3	3	11	10	9
Algeria	8	1	4	3	6	10	7
Rwanda	8	1	2	5	5	12	5

05.06.04 Algeria-Angola 0-0
05.06.04 Gabon-Zimbabwe 1-1
05.06.04 Nigeria-Rwanda 2-0
19.06.04 Rwanda-Gabon 3-1
20.06.04 Angola-Nigeria 1-0
20.06.04 Zimbabwe-Algeria 1-1
03.07.04 Gabon-Angola 2-2
03.07.04 Nigeria-Algeria 1-0
03.07.04 Rwanda-Zimbabwe 0-2
03.09.04 Zimbabwe-Nigeria 0-3
05.09.04 Algeria-Gabon 0-3
05.09.04 Angola-Rwanda 1-0
09.10.04 Gabon-Nigeria 1-1
09.10.04 Rwanda-Algeria 1-1
10.10.04 Angola-Zimbabwe 1-0
26.03.05 Nigeria-Gabon 2-0
27.03.05 Algeria-Rwanda 1-0
27.03.05 Zimbabwe-Angola 2-0
05.06.05 Angola-Algeria 2-1
05.06.05 Rwanda-Nigeria 1-1
05.06.05 Zimbabwe-Gabon 1-0
18.06.05 Gabon-Rwanda 3-0
18.06.05 Nigeria-Angola 1-1
19.06.05 Algeria-Zimbabwe 2-2
04.09.05 Algeria-Nigeria
04.09.05 Angola-Gabon
04.09.05 Zimbabwe-Rwanda
07.10.05 Gabon-Algeria
07.10.05 Nigeria-Zimbabwe
07.10.05 Rwanda-Angola

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	8	4	4	0	14	5	16
Tunisia	7	4	2	1	20	7	14
Guinea	8	3	2	3	10	8	11
Kenya	7	3	1	3	8	11	10
Botswana	8	3	0	5	9	15	9
Malawi	8	0	3	5	8	23	3

05.06.04 Malawi-Morocco 1-1
05.06.04 Tunisia-Botswana 4-1
19.06.04 Botswana-Malawi 2-0
20.06.04 Guinea-Tunisia 2-1
03.07.04 Botswana-Morocco 0-1
03.07.04 Malawi-Guinea 1-1
04.09.04 Kenya-Malawi 3-2
04.09.04 Morocco-Tunisia 1-1
05.09.04 Guinea-Botswana 4-0
09.10.04 Botswana-Kenya 2-1
09.10.04 Malawi-Tunisia 2-2
10.10.04 Guinea-Morocco 1-1
17.11.04 Kenya-Guinea 2-1
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26.03.05 Kenya-Botswana 1-0
26.03.05 Morocco-Guinea 1-0
26.03.05 Tunisia-Malawi 7-0
04.06.05 Botswana-Tunisia 1-3
04.06.05 Morocco-Malawi 4-1
05.06.05 Guinea-Kenya 1-0
11.06.05 Tunisia-Guinea 2-0
18.06.05 Kenya-Morocco 0-0
18.06.05 Malawi-Botswana 1-3
17.08.05 Tunisia-Kenya
03.09.05 Kenya-Tunisia
03.09.05 Morocco-Botswana
04.09.05 Guinea-Malawi
07.10.05 Malawi-Kenya
07.10.05 Tunisia-Morocco
07.10.05 Botswana-Guinea

Group winners qualify for finals

ASIA

4.5 finals berths

2nd stage

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saudi Arabia	5	3	2	0	9	1	11
South Korea	5	3	1	1	9	4	10
Kuwait	5	1	1	3	2	10	4
Uzbekistan	5	0	2	3	4	9	2

09.02.05 South Korea-Kuwait 2-0
09.02.05 Uzbekistan-Saudi Arabia 1-1
25.03.05 Kuwait-Uzbekistan 2-1
25.03.05 Saudi Arabia-South Korea 2-0
30.03.05 Kuwait-Saudi Arabia 0-0
30.03.05 South Korea-Uzbekistan 2-1
03.06.05 Saudi Arabia-Kuwait 3-0
03.06.05 Uzbekistan-South Korea 1-1
08.06.05 Kuwait-South Korea 0-4
08.06.05 Saudi Arabia-Uzbekistan 3-0
17.08.05 South Korea-Saudi Arabia
17.08.05 Uzbekistan-Kuwait

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	5	4	1	0	6	1	13
Japan	5	4	0	1	7	3	12
Bahrain	5	1	1	3	2	4	4
North Korea	5	0	0	5	2	9	0

09.02.05 Bahrain-Iran 0-0
09.02.05 Japan-North Korea 2-1
25.03.05 Iran-Japan 2-1
25.03.05 North Korea-Bahrain 1-2
30.03.05 Japan-Bahrain 1-0
30.03.05 North Korea-Iran 0-2
03.06.05 Iran-North Korea 1-0
03.06.05 Bahrain-Japan 0-1
08.06.05 Iran-Bahrain 1-0
08.06.05 North Korea-Japan 0-2
17.08.05 Bahrain-North Korea
17.08.05 Japan-Iran

Group winners and runners-up qualify for finals. The two third-placed teams meet in a two-leg play-off, the winners of which meet the fourth-placed CONCACAF team over two legs for a place in finals

Asian play-off matchdays:
September 3 (1st leg), September 7 (2nd leg), 2005

CONCACAF

3.5 finals berths

3rd stage

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mexico	5	4	1	0	9	3	13
United States	5	4	0	1	11	3	12
Costa Rica	5	2	1	2	6	8	7
Guatemala	5	1	1	3	7	8	4
Trinidad & Tob	5	1	1	3	4	9	4
Panama	5	0	2	3	2	8	2

09.02.05 Costa Rica-Mexico 1-2
09.02.05 Panama-Guatemala 0-0
09.02.05 Trinidad & Tob-United States 1-2
26.03.05 Costa Rica-Panama 2-1
26.03.05 Guatemala-Trinidad & Tob 5-1
27.03.05 Mexico-United States 2-1
30.03.05 Panama-Mexico 1-1
30.03.05 Trinidad & Tob-Costa Rica 0-0
30.03.05 United States-Guatemala 2-0
04.06.05 Guatemala-Mexico 0-2
04.06.05 Trinidad & Tob-Panama 2-0
04.06.05 United States-Costa Rica 3-0
08.06.05 Costa Rica-Guatemala 3-2
08.06.05 Mexico-Trinidad & Tob 2-0
08.06.05 Panama-United States 0-3
17.08.05 Guatemala-Panama
17.08.05 Mexico-Costa Rica
17.08.05 United States-Trinidad & Tob
03.09.05 Panama-Costa Rica
03.09.05 Trinidad & Tob-Guatemala
03.09.05 United States-Mexico
07.09.05 Costa Rica-Trinidad & Tob
07.09.05 Guatemala-United States
07.09.05 Mexico-Panama
08.10.05 Costa Rica-United States
08.10.05 Mexico-Guatemala
08.10.05 Panama-Trinidad & Tob
12.10.05 Guatemala-Costa Rica
12.10.05 Trinidad & Tob-Mexico
12.10.05 United States-Panama

Top three qualify for finals. The fourth-placed team meet the winners of the Asian play-off over two legs for a place in finals

EUROPE

14 finals berths (including hosts Germany, who qualify automatically)

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland	8	7	1	0	20	3	22
Czech Republic	8	7	0	1	28	7	21
Romania	9	5	1	3	15	10	16
Finland	7	3	0	4	13	14	9
Macedonia	9	2	2	5	10	16	8
Armenia	9	1	1	7	5	20	4
Andorra	8	1	1	6	4	25	4

18.08.04 Macedonia-Armenia ... 3-0
18.08.04 Romania-Finland ... 2-1
04.09.04 Finland-Andorra ... 3-0
04.09.04 Romania-Macedonia ... 2-1
08.09.04 Andorra-Romania ... 1-5
08.09.04 Armenia-Finland ... 0-2
08.09.04 Holland-Czech Republic ... 2-0
09.10.04 Czech Republic-Romania ... 1-0
09.10.04 Finland-Armenia ... 3-1
09.10.04 Macedonia-Holland ... 2-2
13.10.04 Andorra-Macedonia ... 1-0
13.10.04 Armenia-Czech Republic ... 0-3
13.10.04 Holland-Finland ... 3-1
17.11.04 Andorra-Holland ... 0-3
17.11.04 Armenia-Romania ... 1-1
17.11.04 Macedonia-Czech Republic ... 0-2
09.02.05 Macedonia-Andorra ... 0-0
26.03.05 Armenia-Andorra ... 2-1
26.03.05 Czech Republic-Finland ... 4-3
26.03.05 Romania-Holland ... 0-2
30.03.05 Andorra-Czech Republic ... 0-4
30.03.05 Holland-Armenia ... 2-0
30.03.05 Macedonia-Romania ... 1-2
04.06.05 Armenia-Macedonia ... 1-2
04.06.05 Czech Republic-Andorra ... 6-1
04.06.05 Holland-Romania ... 2-0
08.06.05 Czech Republic-Macedonia ... 6-1
08.06.05 Finland-Holland ... 0-4
08.06.05 Romania-Armenia ... 3-0
17.08.05 Macedonia-Finland
17.08.05 Romania-Andorra
03.09.05 Andorra-Finland
03.09.05 Armenia-Holland
03.09.05 Romania-Czech Republic
07.09.05 Czech Republic-Armenia
07.09.05 Finland-Macedonia
07.09.05 Holland-Andorra
08.10.05 Czech Republic-Holland
08.10.05 Finland-Romania
12.10.05 Andorra-Armenia
12.10.05 Finland-Czech Republic
12.10.05 Holland-Macedonia

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ukraine	9	7	2	0	15	3	23
Turkey	9	4	4	1	19	7	16
Greece	9	4	3	2	12	7	15
Denmark	8	3	3	2	13	8	12
Albania	9	3	0	6	7	16	9
Georgia	7	1	2	4	10	16	5
Kazakhstan	7	0	0	7	2	21	0

04.09.04 Albania-Greece ... 2-1
04.09.04 Denmark-Ukraine ... 1-1
04.09.04 Turkey-Georgia ... 1-1
08.09.04 Georgia-Albania ... 2-0
08.09.04 Greece-Turkey ... 0-0
08.09.04 Kazakhstan-Ukraine ... 1-2
09.10.04 Albania-Denmark ... 0-2
09.10.04 Turkey-Kazakhstan ... 4-0
09.10.04 Ukraine-Greece ... 1-1
13.10.04 Denmark-Turkey ... 1-1
13.10.04 Kazakhstan-Albania ... 0-1
13.10.04 Ukraine-Georgia ... 2-0
17.11.04 Georgia-Denmark ... 2-2
17.11.04 Greece-Kazakhstan ... 3-1
17.11.04 Turkey-Ukraine ... 0-3
09.02.05 Albania-Ukraine ... 0-2
09.02.05 Greece-Denmark ... 2-1
26.03.05 Denmark-Kazakhstan ... 3-0
26.03.05 Georgia-Greece ... 1-3
26.03.05 Turkey-Albania ... 2-0
30.03.05 Georgia-Turkey ... 2-5
30.03.05 Greece-Albania ... 2-0
30.03.05 Ukraine-Denmark ... 1-0
04.06.05 Albania-Georgia ... 3-2
04.06.05 Turkey-Greece ... 0-0
04.06.05 Ukraine-Kazakhstan ... 2-0
08.06.05 Denmark-Albania ... 3-1
08.06.05 Greece-Ukraine ... 0-1
08.06.05 Kazakhstan-Turkey ... 0-6
17.08.05 Kazakhstan-Georgia
03.09.05 Albania-Kazakhstan
03.09.05 Georgia-Ukraine
03.09.05 Turkey-Denmark
07.09.05 Denmark-Georgia
07.09.05 Kazakhstan-Greece
07.09.05 Ukraine-Turkey
08.10.05 Denmark-Greece
08.10.05 Georgia-Kazakhstan
08.10.05 Ukraine-Albania
12.10.05 Albania-Turkey
12.10.05 Greece-Georgia
12.10.05 Kazakhstan-Denmark

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portugal	8	6	2	0	24	4	20
Slovakia	8	5	2	1	22	7	17
Russia	7	4	2	1	15	10	14
Latvia	8	4	1	3	15	14	13
Estonia	9	3	2	4	12	15	11
Liechtenstein	8	1	1	6	9	19	4
Luxembourg	8	0	0	8	4	32	0

18.08.04 Liechtenstein-Estonia ... 1-2
18.08.04 Slovakia-Luxembourg ... 3-1
04.09.04 Estonia-Luxembourg ... 4-0
04.09.04 Latvia-Portugal ... 0-2
04.09.04 Russia-Slovakia ... 1-1
08.09.04 Luxembourg-Latvia ... 3-4
08.09.04 Portugal-Estonia ... 4-0
08.09.04 Slovakia-Liechtenstein ... 7-0
09.10.04 Liechtenstein-Portugal ... 2-2
09.10.04 Luxembourg-Russia ... 0-4
09.10.04 Slovakia-Latvia ... 4-1
13.10.04 Latvia-Estonia ... 2-2
13.10.04 Luxembourg-Liechtenstein ... 0-4
13.10.04 Portugal-Russia ... 7-1
17.11.04 Liechtenstein-Latvia ... 1-3
17.11.04 Luxembourg-Portugal ... 0-5
17.11.04 Russia-Estonia ... 4-0
26.03.05 Estonia-Slovakia ... 1-2
26.03.05 Liechtenstein-Russia ... 1-2
30.03.05 Estonia-Russia ... 1-1
30.03.05 Latvia-Luxembourg ... 4-0
30.03.05 Slovakia-Portugal ... 1-1
04.06.05 Estonia-Liechtenstein ... 2-0
04.06.05 Portugal-Slovakia ... 2-0
04.06.05 Russia-Latvia ... 2-0
08.06.05 Estonia-Portugal ... 0-1
08.06.05 Latvia-Liechtenstein ... 1-0
08.06.05 Luxembourg-Slovakia ... 0-4
17.08.05 Latvia-Russia
17.08.05 Liechtenstein-Slovakia
03.09.05 Estonia-Latvia
03.09.05 Portugal-Luxembourg
03.09.05 Russia-Liechtenstein
07.09.05 Latvia-Slovakia
07.09.05 Liechtenstein-Luxembourg
07.09.05 Russia-Portugal
08.10.05 Portugal-Liechtenstein
08.10.05 Russia-Luxembourg
08.10.05 Slovakia-Estonia
12.10.05 Luxembourg-Estonia
12.10.05 Portugal-Latvia
12.10.05 Slovakia-Russia

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rep Ireland	7	3	4	0	11	4	13
Switzerland	6	3	3	0	13	4	12
Israel	7	2	5	0	10	8	11
France	6	2	4	0	5	1	10
Cyprus	6	0	1	5	4	12	1
Faroe Islands	6	0	1	5	3	17	1

04.09.04 France-Israel ... 0-0
04.09.04 Rep Ireland-Cyprus ... 3-0
04.09.04 Switzerland-Faroe Islands ... 6-0
08.09.04 Faroe Islands-France ... 0-2
08.09.04 Israel-Cyprus ... 2-1
08.09.04 Switzerland-Rep Ireland ... 1-1
09.10.04 Cyprus-Faroe Islands ... 2-2
09.10.04 France-Rep Ireland ... 0-0
09.10.04 Israel-Switzerland ... 2-2
13.10.04 Cyprus-France ... 0-2
13.10.04 Rep Ireland-Faroe Islands ... 2-0
17.11.04 Cyprus-Israel ... 1-2
26.03.05 France-Switzerland ... 0-0
26.03.05 Israel-Rep Ireland ... 1-1
30.03.05 Israel-France ... 1-1
30.03.05 Switzerland-Cyprus ... 1-0
04.06.05 Faroe Islands-Switzerland ... 1-3
04.06.05 Rep Ireland-Israel ... 2-2
08.06.05 Faroe Islands-Rep Ireland ... 0-2
17.08.05 Faroe Islands-Cyprus
03.09.05 France-Faroe Islands
03.09.05 Switzerland-Israel
07.09.05 Cyprus-Switzerland
07.09.05 Faroe Islands-Israel
07.09.05 Rep Ireland-France
08.10.05 Cyprus-Rep Ireland
08.10.05 Switzerland-France
08.10.05 Israel-Faroe Islands
12.10.05 France-Cyprus
12.10.05 Rep Ireland-Switzerland

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy	6	4	1	1	9	5	13
Norway	6	2	3	1	6	3	9
Slovenia	6	2	3	1	6	5	9
Belarus	6	1	4	1	10	7	7
Scotland	6	1	3	2	3	4	6
Moldova	6	0	2	4	1	11	2

04.09.04 Italy-Norway ... 2-1
04.09.04 Slovenia-Moldova ... 3-0
08.09.04 Moldova-Italy ... 0-1
08.09.04 Norway-Belarus ... 1-1
08.09.04 Scotland-Slovenia ... 0-0
09.10.04 Belarus-Moldova ... 4-0
09.10.04 Scotland-Norway ... 0-1
09.10.04 Slovenia-Italy ... 1-0
13.10.04 Italy-Belarus ... 4-3
13.10.04 Moldova-Scotland ... 1-1
13.10.04 Norway-Slovenia ... 3-0
26.03.05 Italy-Scotland ... 2-0
30.03.05 Moldova-Norway ... 0-0
30.03.05 Slovenia-Belarus ... 1-1
04.06.05 Belarus-Slovenia ... 1-1
04.06.05 Norway-Italy ... 0-0
04.06.05 Scotland-Moldova ... 2-0
08.06.05 Belarus-Scotland ... 0-0
03.09.05 Moldova-Belarus
03.09.05 Scotland-Italy
03.09.05 Slovenia-Norway
07.09.05 Belarus-Italy
07.09.05 Moldova-Slovenia
07.09.05 Norway-Scotland
08.10.05 Italy-Slovenia
08.10.05 Norway-Moldova
08.10.05 Scotland-Belarus
12.10.05 Belarus-Norway
12.10.05 Italy-Moldova
12.10.05 Slovenia-Scotland

Group 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Poland	7	6	0	1	22	5	18
England	6	5	1	0	13	3	16
Austria	6	3	2	1	11	8	11
N Ireland	6	0	3	3	5	13	3
Wales	6	0	2	4	5	11	2
Azerbaijan	7	0	2	5	1	17	2

04.09.04 Austria-England ... 2-2
04.09.04 Azerbaijan-Wales ... 1-1
04.09.04 Northern Ireland-Poland ... 0-3
08.09.04 Austria-Azerbaijan ... 2-0
08.09.04 Poland-England ... 1-2
08.09.04 Wales-Northern Ireland ... 2-2
09.10.04 Austria-Poland ... 1-3
09.10.04 Azerbaijan-Northern Ireland ... 0-0
09.10.04 England-Wales ... 2-0
13.10.04 Azerbaijan-England ... 0-1
13.10.04 Northern Ireland-Austria ... 3-3
13.10.04 Wales-Poland ... 2-3
26.03.05 England-Northern Ireland ... 4-0
26.03.05 Poland-Azerbaijan ... 8-0
26.03.05 Wales-Austria ... 0-2
30.03.05 Austria-Wales ... 1-0
30.03.05 England-Azerbaijan ... 2-0
30.03.05 Poland-Northern Ireland ... 1-0
04.06.05 Azerbaijan-Poland ... 0-3
03.09.05 Northern Ireland-Azerbaijan
03.09.05 Poland-Austria
03.09.05 Wales-England
07.09.05 Azerbaijan-Austria
07.09.05 Northern Ireland-England
07.09.05 Poland-Wales
08.10.05 England-Austria
08.10.05 Northern Ireland-Wales
12.10.05 Austria-Northern Ireland
12.10.05 England-Poland
12.10.05 Wales-Azerbaijan

Group 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	7	3	4	0	10	2	13
Serbia & M'gro	6	3	3	0	10	0	12
Lithuania	6	2	3	1	7	3	9
Belgium	6	2	2	2	7	7	8
Bosnia-Herz	6	1	4	1	7	8	7
San Marino	7	0	0	7	2	23	0

04.09.04 Belgium-Lithuania ... 1-1
04.09.04 San Marino-Serbia & M'negro ... 0-3
08.09.04 Bosnia-Herz-Spain ... 1-1
08.09.04 Lithuania-San Marino ... 4-0
09.10.04 Bosnia-Herz-Serbia & M'negro ... 0-0
09.10.04 Spain-Belgium ... 2-0
13.10.04 Lithuania-Spain ... 0-0
13.10.04 Serbia & M'negro-San Marino ... 5-0
17.11.04 Belgium-Serbia & M'negro ... 0-2
17.11.04 San Marino-Lithuania ... 0-1
09.02.05 Spain-San Marino ... 5-0
26.03.05 Belgium-Bosnia-Herz ... 4-1
30.03.05 Bosnia-Herz-Lithuania ... 1-1
30.03.05 San Marino-Belgium ... 1-2
30.03.05 Serbia & M'negro-Spain ... 0-0
04.06.05 San Marino-Bosnia-Herz ... 1-3
04.06.05 Serbia & M'negro-Belgium ... 0-0
04.06.05 Spain-Lithuania ... 1-0
08.06.05 Spain-Bosnia-Herz ... 1-1
03.09.05 Bosnia-Herz-Belgium
03.09.05 Serbia & M'negro-Lithuania
07.09.05 Belgium-San Marino
07.09.05 Lithuania-Bosnia-Herz
07.09.05 Spain-Serbia & M'negro
08.10.05 Belgium-Spain
08.10.05 Bosnia-Herz-San Marino
08.10.05 Lithuania-Serbia & M'negro
12.10.05 Lithuania-Belgium
12.10.05 San Marino-Spain
12.10.05 Serbia & M'negro-Bosnia-Herz

Group 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	6	5	1	0	16	3	16
Sweden	6	5	0	1	23	2	15
Hungary	6	3	1	2	9	11	10
Bulgaria	6	2	2	2	11	11	8
Iceland	7	1	1	5	10	18	4
Malta	7	0	1	6	2	26	1

04.09.04 Croatia-Hungary ... 3-0
04.09.04 Iceland-Bulgaria ... 1-3
04.09.04 Malta-Sweden ... 0-7
08.09.04 Hungary-Iceland ... 3-2
08.09.04 Sweden-Croatia ... 0-1
09.10.04 Croatia-Bulgaria ... 2-2
09.10.04 Malta-Iceland ... 0-0
09.10.04 Sweden-Hungary ... 3-0
13.10.04 Bulgaria-Malta ... 4-1
13.10.04 Iceland-Sweden ... 1-4
17.11.04 Malta-Hungary ... 0-2
26.03.05 Bulgaria-Sweden ... 0-3
26.03.05 Croatia-Iceland ... 4-0
30.03.05 Croatia-Malta ... 3-0
30.03.05 Hungary-Bulgaria ... 1-1
04.06.05 Bulgaria-Croatia ... 1-3
04.06.05 Iceland-Hungary ... 2-3
04.06.05 Sweden-Malta ... 6-0
08.06.05 Iceland-Malta ... 4-1
03.09.05 Hungary-Malta
03.09.05 Iceland-Croatia
03.09.05 Sweden-Bulgaria
07.09.05 Bulgaria-Iceland
07.09.05 Hungary-Sweden
07.09.05 Malta-Croatia
08.10.05 Bulgaria-Hungary
08.10.05 Croatia-Sweden
12.10.05 Hungary-Croatia
12.10.05 Malta-Bulgaria
12.10.05 Sweden-Iceland

Group winners and the two best runners-up qualify for finals. The other six runners-up are paired in three two-leg play-off matches, the winners of which also qualify for finals*
**Group runners-up will be ranked according to their results against the teams finishing 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th in their respective groups*

European play-off matchdays:
November 12 (1st leg), November 16 (2nd leg), 2005

OCEANIA

0.5 finals berths

3rd stage

03.09.05	Australia-Solomon Islands
06.09.05	Solomon Islands-Australia

Winners meet the fifth-placed South American team over two legs for a place in finals

SOUTH AMERICA

4.5 finals berths

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	15	9	4	2	27	15	31
Brazil	15	7	6	2	26	16	27
Ecuador	15	7	2	6	21	18	23
Paraguay	15	6	4	5	21	22	22
Colombia	15	5	5	5	20	12	20
Chile	15	5	5	5	17	16	20
Uruguay	15	4	6	5	19	26	18
Peru	15	3	6	6	15	21	15
Venezuela	15	4	3	8	16	23	15
Bolivia	15	4	1	10	17	30	13

06.09.03	Argentina-Chile	2-2
06.09.03	Ecuador-Venezuela	2-0
06.09.03	Peru-Paraguay	4-1
07.09.03	Colombia-Brazil	1-2
07.09.03	Uruguay-Bolivia	5-0
09.09.03	Chile-Peru	2-1
09.09.03	Venezuela-Argentina	0-3
10.09.03	Bolivia-Colombia	4-0
10.09.03	Brazil-Ecuador	1-0
10.09.03	Paraguay-Uruguay	4-1
15.11.03	Argentina-Bolivia	3-0
15.11.03	Colombia-Venezuela	0-1
15.11.03	Paraguay-Ecuador	2-1
15.11.03	Uruguay-Chile	2-1
16.11.03	Peru-Brazil	1-1
18.11.03	Chile-Paraguay	0-1
18.11.03	Venezuela-Bolivia	2-1
19.11.03	Brazil-Uruguay	3-3
19.11.03	Colombia-Argentina	1-1
19.11.03	Ecuador-Peru	0-0
30.03.04	Argentina-Ecuador	1-0
30.03.04	Bolivia-Chile	0-2
31.03.04	Paraguay-Brazil	0-0
31.03.04	Peru-Colombia	0-2
31.03.04	Uruguay-Venezuela	0-3
01.06.04	Bolivia-Paraguay	2-1
01.06.04	Uruguay-Peru	1-3
01.06.04	Venezuela-Chile	0-1
02.06.04	Brazil-Argentina	3-1
02.06.04	Ecuador-Colombia	2-1
05.06.04	Ecuador-Bolivia	3-2
06.06.04	Argentina-Paraguay	0-0
06.06.04	Chile-Brazil	1-1
06.06.04	Colombia-Uruguay	5-0
06.06.04	Peru-Venezuela	0-0
04.09.04	Peru-Argentina	1-3
05.09.04	Brazil-Bolivia	3-1
05.09.04	Chile-Colombia	0-0
05.09.04	Paraguay-Venezuela	1-0
05.09.04	Uruguay-Ecuador	1-0
09.10.04	Argentina-Uruguay	4-2
09.10.04	Bolivia-Peru	1-0
09.10.04	Colombia-Paraguay	1-1
09.10.04	Venezuela-Brazil	2-5
10.10.04	Ecuador-Chile	2-0
12.10.04	Bolivia-Uruguay	0-0
13.10.04	Brazil-Colombia	0-0
13.10.04	Chile-Argentina	0-0
13.10.04	Paraguay-Peru	1-1
14.10.04	Venezuela-Ecuador	3-1
17.11.04	Argentina-Venezuela	3-2
17.11.04	Colombia-Bolivia	1-0
17.11.04	Ecuador-Brazil	1-0
17.11.04	Peru-Chile	2-1
17.11.04	Uruguay-Paraguay	1-0
26.03.05	Bolivia-Argentina	1-2
26.03.05	Chile-Uruguay	1-1
26.03.05	Venezuela-Colombia	0-0
27.03.05	Brazil-Peru	1-0
27.03.05	Ecuador-Paraguay	5-2
29.03.05	Bolivia-Venezuela	3-1
30.03.05	Argentina-Colombia	1-0
30.03.05	Paraguay-Chile	2-1
30.03.05	Peru-Ecuador	2-2
30.03.05	Uruguay-Brazil	1-1
04.06.05	Chile-Bolivia	3-1
04.06.05	Colombia-Peru	5-0
04.06.05	Ecuador-Argentina	2-0
04.06.05	Venezuela-Uruguay	1-1
05.06.05	Brazil-Paraguay	4-1
07.06.05	Peru-Uruguay	0-0
08.06.05	Argentina-Brazil	3-1
08.06.05	Chile-Venezuela	2-1
08.06.05	Colombia-Ecuador	3-0
08.06.05	Paraguay-Bolivia	4-1
03.09.05	Bolivia-Ecuador	
03.09.05	Paraguay-Argentina	
03.09.05	Venezuela-Peru	
04.09.05	Brazil-Chile	
04.09.05	Uruguay-Colombia	
08/09.10.05	Argentina-Peru	
08/09.10.05	Bolivia-Brazil	
08/09.10.05	Colombia-Chile	
08/09.10.05	Ecuador-Uruguay	
08/09.10.05	Venezuela-Paraguay	
11/12.10.05	Brazil-Venezuela	
11/12.10.05	Chile-Ecuador	
11/12.10.05	Paraguay-Colombia	
11/12.10.05	Peru-Bolivia	
11/12.10.05	Uruguay-Argentina	

Top four qualify for finals. Fifth-placed team meet the Oceania section winners over two legs for a place in finals

INTERNATIONALS

Friday, July 1

July 1 - Gaborone - friendly
Botswana 0
DR Congo 0

Saturday, July 2

July 2 - Vancouver - friendly
Canada 1 (McKenna 70)
Honduras 2 (Ramirez 52, Velasquez 56)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 4,105. **Ref:** Valenzuela (USA)
Canada: Sutton - Braz, McKenna, Gervais, Bernier (Leduc 66), Hume (Gerba 58), Peters (Brennan 58), Grande (Serioux 72), Hutchinson, De Rosario (Occean 78), Simpson.
Honduras: Coello - Izaguirre, Vallecillo, Figueroa, Henriquez (Thomas 46), Guifarro, Garcia (W Palacios 63), Turcios (Moran 63), Berrios, Velasquez (M Nunez 66), Ramirez (E Nunez 75).

GOLD CUP

In the United States

Group A

July 6 - Miami
Colombia 0
Panama 1 (Tejada 70)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,311. **Ref:** Batres (Gtm)
Colombia: Mondragon - Anchico, De la Cuesta, Mendoza, Passo, J C Ramirez, Patino, Moreno (A Ramirez 46), Hurtado (Aguilar 69), Renteria, Arzuaga (Briceno 80).
Panama: Penedo - Rivera, J A Torres, Baloy, Moreno, Medina (Avila 69), Gomez, Phillips, Tejada, Mitre (Blanco 46), Julio Dely Valdes (Jorge Dely Valdes 80).

July 6 - Miami
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (Birchall 27)
Honduras 1 (Figueroa 43)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,311. **Ref:** Navarro (Can)
Trinidad & Tobago: Jack - A John, M Andrews, Lawrence, C Gray, Birchall, Whitley, Rahim, Scotland (Jones 71), S John, Theobold (Samuel 64).
Honduras: Coello (Morales 84) - Henriquez, Vallecillo, Figueroa, Izaguirre, Guerrero, Berrios, Garcia, Turcios (W Palacios 64), Velasquez, Ramirez (M Nunez 46).

July 10 - Miami
Honduras 2 (Velasquez 79, 82)
Colombia 1 (Moreno pen 30)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 17,292. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Mex)
Honduras: Coello - Henriquez (W Palacios 72), Figueroa, Izaguirre, Berrios (Guifarro 62), Garcia, Turcios, Vallecillo, Guerrero, Velasquez, M Nunez.
Colombia: Mondragon - Palacio, De la Cuesta, Mendoza, Benitez, Patino (Aguilar 46), J C Ramirez, Castrillon, Moreno, Renteria (Torres 76), Arzuaga (Valoyes 67). *Sent off: Valoyes 85min.*

July 10 - Miami
Panama 2 (Tejada 24, 90)
Trinidad & Tobago 2 (M Andrews 17, Glen 90)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 17,292. **Ref:** Wijngaarde (Sur)
Panama: Penedo - Rivera, Moreno, J A Torres, Baloy, Gomez (Blanco 46), Julio Dely Valdes (Brown 74), Medina, Phillips (Avila 88), Tejada, Mitre.
Trinidad & Tobago: Jack - A John, M Andrews, Lawrence, Birchall, Scotland (Jones 69), S John, Theobold (Eve 69), Spann, Samuel (Glen 83), C Gray.

July 12 - Miami
Colombia 2 (Aguilar 76, Hurtado 79)
Trinidad & Tobago 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,000. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Mex)
Colombia: Mondragon - Anchico, De la Cuesta, Mendoza, Passo, Patino (Hurtado 67), Leal (Renteria 52), Castrillon, A Ramirez, Aguilar, Arzuaga (J C Ramirez 78).
Trinidad & Tobago: Jack - M Andrews (Charles 75), Lawrence, Birchall, Samuel, C Gray, Spann, Glen (Eve 46), Scotland (Rahim 46), A John, S John.

July 12 - Miami
Honduras 1 (S Caballero 79)
Panama 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,000. **Ref:** Wijngaarde (Sur)
Honduras: Coello - W Palacios, Figueroa, S Caballero, Ramirez (Velasquez 60), Garcia, Thomas (Turcios 60), Izaguirre, Guerrero (Moran 74), Guifarro, M Nunez.
Panama: Penedo - Rivera, Moreno, J A Torres, L Henriquez, Blanco, Medina (Julio Dely Valdes 84), Phillips, Mitre (Avila 55), Jorge Dely Valdes, Tejada (Rodriguez 46).

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Honduras	3	2	1	0	4	2	7
Panama	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Colombia	3	1	0	2	3	3	3
Trinidad & Tob	3	0	2	1	3	5	2

Group B

July 7 - Seattle
Canada 0
Costa Rica 1 (Soto pen 30)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 15,831. **Ref:** Prendergast (Jam)
Canada: Sutton - Braz, McKenna, Bernier, Gerba (Hume 70), Brennan, Grande (Peters 90), Hutchinson, De Rosario, Simpson, Leduc (Serioux 83). *Sent off: McKenna 81min.*
Costa Rica: Miller - Umana, D Fonseca, Lopez, Ruiz, Soto (Rojas 76), Bolanos, V Cordero, Wallace (Segura 56), Bryce (Sequeira 85), Porras.

July 7 - Seattle
Cuba 1 (More 18)
United States 4 (Dempsey 44, Donovan 87, 90, Beasley 89)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 15,831. **Ref:** Pineda (Hnd)
Cuba: Molina - Fernandez, Marquez, Cruzata, Pedro (Munoz 90), Aquino, Colome, Villaurrutia, A Cervantes, More (Duartes 57), Galindo (Gil 77). *Sent off: Colome 50min.*
United States: Hahnemann - Hejduk, Conrad, Sanneh, Armas, Olsen (Wolff 75), Quaranta, Davis (O'Brien 75), Dempsey, Casey (Donovan 66), Beasley.

July 9 - Seattle
Costa Rica 3 (Brenes 61, pen 85, Soto pen 81)
Cuba 1 (Galindo 72)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,109. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
Costa Rica: Mesen - Wright, Umana, Diaz (Miller 46), Bolanos (Bryce 75), Segura, Sequeira, Soto, Badilla, Ruiz (Brenes 46), Rojas.
Cuba: Molina - Pedro (Munoz 68), Marquez, Cruzata, Villaurrutia, A Cervantes, More, Galindo, Morales (Duarte 85), Fernandez, Faife (Ramirez 60).

July 9 - Seattle
United States 2 (Hutchinson og 48, Donovan 90)
Canada 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,109. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)
United States: Keller - Cherundolo, Pope (Conrad 46), Onyewu, Vanney, Mastroeni, Ralston, Donovan, O'Brien (Beasley 67), Wolff, Noonan (Armas 81).
Canada: Sutton - Braz, Gervais, Hutchinson, Simpson, Bernier, Leduc (Peters 67), Serioux, Brennan (Grande 79), De Rosario, Occean (Gerba 70). *Sent off: Serioux 82min.*

July 12 - Foxboro
United States 0
Costa Rica 0
Att: 15,211. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
United States: Keller - Cherundolo, Sanneh, Conrad, Hejduk, Armas, Olsen, O'Brien (Beasley 58), Ralston, Noonan (Donovan 66), Dempsey (Wolff 78).
Costa Rica: Porras - Wallace, V Cordero, Umana, Miller, Bryce, D Fonseca, Lopez (Sequeira 68), Soto (Ruiz 76), Brenes (Bolanos 61), Rojas.

July 12 - Foxboro
Canada 2 (Gerba 68, Hutchinson 87)
Cuba 1 (A Cervantes 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,211. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
Canada: Sutton - Braz, Pozniak (Simpson 62), McKenna, Gervais, Bernier, Gerba, Occean, Grande (Peters 56), Hutchinson, De Rosario.
Cuba: Aviles - Pedro (Munoz 75), Marquez, Fernandez, Cruzata, Gil (Duarte 65), Villaurrutia (Faife 58), Colome, Morales, A Cervantes, More.

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
United States	3	2	1	0	6	1	7
Costa Rica	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Canada	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
Cuba	3	0	0	3	3	9	0

Group C

July 8 - Los Angeles
South Africa 2 (Evans 28, Van Heerden 41)
Mexico 1 (F Rodriguez 83)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 27,000. **Ref:** Sibrian (ElS)
South Africa: Marlin - Lekgwathi, Gaxa, Katza, Thwala, L Mokoena (Noble 65), Siphika, Evans, Van Heerden (Bianchi 90), Nomvete (Leremi 71), Ndlela.
Mexico: Corona - Altamirano, F Rodriguez, Osorio, Salcido, Pineda, Lopez (L Perez 71), Naelson (Bravo 53), R Garcia (A Medina 46), Borgetti, Marquez Lugo.

July 8 - Los Angeles
Guatemala 3 (Ruiz pen 11, 45, 87)
Jamaica 4 (Shelton 3, Fuller 5, A Williams pen 43, Hue 57)
HT: 2-3. **Att:** 27,000. **Ref:** Hall (USA)
Guatemala: Molina - Morales (Figueroa 29), Melgar, G Cabrera, Ponciano (Sandoval 62), Sanabria, Thompson, Romero, Ramirez, Villatoro (Davila 75), Ruiz.
Jamaica: Ricketts - Marshall, Stewart, T Sawyers, Scarlett, C Davis, A Williams (J Johnson 75), Hue (Daley 65), Stephenson, Fuller, Shelton (Ralph 56). *Sent off: C Davis 25min.*

July 10 - Los Angeles
Mexico 4 (Borgetti 5, 14, G Galindo 54, Bravo 65)
Guatemala 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 30,710. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
Mexico: Munoz - Mendez, F Rodriguez, Osorio, Salcido, C Morales, G Galindo, L Perez, Naelson (Padilla 73), Borgetti (Bravo 46), A Medina (Juan P Garcia 67).
Guatemala: Klee - Chen (Sanabria 69), Hernandez, G Cabrera, Figueroa, Martinez, Villatoro (Sandoval 64), Thompson, Ramirez, Ruiz, Davila (Romero 77). *Sent off: Ramirez 88min.*

July 10 - Los Angeles
Jamaica 3 (Hue 35, Stewart 44, Bennett 80)
South Africa 3 (Raselemane 35, Ndela 41, Nomvete 56)
HT: 2-2. **Att:** 30,710. **Ref:** Stott (USA)
Jamaica: Ricketts - Stewart, Taylor, T Sawyers (Ralph 74), Scarlett, Marshall (Daley 83), A Williams, J Johnson (Bennett 64), Hue, Stephenson, Fuller.
South Africa: T Radebe - Lekgwathi, Thwala, Evans, Katza, Gaxa, Siphika (Nkosi 46), Van Heerden, Raselemane (Bianchi 56), Nomvete (Noble 87), Ndlela. *Sent off: Gaxa 48min.*

July 13 - Houston
Guatemala 1 (Romero 37)
South Africa 1 (Nkosi 45)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 45,311. **Ref:** Stott (USA)
Guatemala: Motta - Melgar, G Cabrera (Morales 73), Gomez, Sanabria, Ponciano, Giron, Romero (Zacarias 63), Davila, Figueroa, Ruiz.
South Africa: Marlin - Lekgwathi, Bianchi, Katza, Peterson, Siphika, Raselemane (Kgatle 66), Nkosi, Ndlela, Nomvete (Leremi 81), Van Heerden (Noble 81).

July 13 - Houston
Mexico 1 (A Medina 19)
Jamaica 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 45,311. **Ref:** Quesada (CR)
Mexico: Munoz - Altamirano, F Rodriguez, Osorio, Salcido, Pineda, L Perez (Bravo 81), Naelson (Marquez Lugo 69), G Galindo, A Medina (Lopez 58), Borgetti.
Jamaica: S Sawyers - Taylor, Stewart, G Reid, C Davis, Daley, Hue, Stephenson, A Williams, Ralph (Fuller 59), Bennett (J Johnson 59). *Sent off: Daley 71min.*

GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mexico	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
South Africa	3	1	2	0	6	5	5
Jamaica	3	1	1	1	7	7	4
Guatemala	3	0	1	2	4	9	1

Top two from each group plus the two best third-placed sides qualified for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals

July 16 - Foxboro
Honduras 3 (Velasquez 6, Turcios 27, M Nunez 29)
Costa Rica 2 (Bolanos 39, Ruiz 81)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 22,108. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
Honduras: Coello - S Caballero, Izaguirre, Figueroa, Garcia (W Palacios 82), Berrios (Vallecillo 83), Henriquez, Turcios (Guifarro 69), Guerrero, Velasquez, M Nunez.
Costa Rica: Mesen - V Cordero, Umana, Wallace, Miller, Sequeira, D Fonseca (Lopez 73), Bryce (Ruiz 62), Soto, Rojas, Brenes (Bolanos 37).

July 16 - Foxboro
United States 3 (Wolff 6, Beasley 42, 83)
Jamaica 1 (Fuller 88)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 22,108. **Ref:** Batres (Gtm)
United States: Keller - Conrad, Onyewu, Vanney, Cherundolo (Olsen 25), Mastroeni, O'Brien, Donovan, Ralston (Quaranta 84), Beasley, Wolff (Armas 80). *Sent off: Olsen 58min.*
Jamaica: Ricketts - Stewart, Marshall, Taylor, T Sawyers (Ralph 60), Stephenson, Scarlett, A Williams, Hue (G Reid 78), Fuller, Shelton (J Johnson 70). *Sent off: Taylor 66min.*

July 17 - Houston
Mexico 1 (Pineda 65)
Colombia 2 (Castrillon 59, Aguilar 75)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 60,050. **Ref:** Sibrian (ElS)
Mexico: Munoz - F Rodriguez, Salcido, Osorio, Mendez (Bravo 61), Pineda, Naelson (Padilla 64), L Perez, G Galindo, A Medina, Marquez Lugo (Altamirano 33). *Sent off: A Medina 90min.*
Colombia: Mondragon - Anchico, Passo, Mendoza, De la Cuesta, Patino (J C Ramirez 90), Castrillon, Aguilar, Leal (Hurtado 72), Renteria (Arzuaga 72), Moreno.

July 17 - Houston
South Africa 1 (Ndlela 68)
Panama 1 (Jorge Dely Valdes 48)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 60,050.
Ref: Prendergast (Jam)
Panama 5-3 on pens
South Africa: Marlin - Lekgwathi, Katza, Evans, Thwala, Gaxa, Klate (Noble 82), Nomvete (Kgatle 117), Nkosi, Ndlela, Van Heerden (Raselemane 65).
Panama: Penedo - Rivera, J A Torres, Baloy, Guardia (R Torres 100), Gomez, Blanco, Phillips, Henriquez (Rodriguez 99), Jorge Dely Valdes (Avila 104), Tejada.

Semi-finals

July 21 - East Rutherford
Honduras 1 (Guerrero 30)
United States 2 (O'Brien 86, Onyewu 90)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 41,721. **Ref:** Prendergast (Jam)
Honduras: Coello (J Morales 46) - S Caballero, Figueroa, Berrios, Garcia, Vallecillo, Henriquez (Guifarro 89), Turcios (W Palacios 75), Velasquez, M Nunez, Guerrero.
United States: Keller - Ralston, Conrad, Onyewu, Pope (Hejduk 15), Mastroeni (Dempsey 58), Armas, O'Brien, Beasley, Wolff (Noonan 63), Donovan.

July 21 - East Rutherford
Colombia 2 (Patino 62, 88)
Panama 3 (Phillips 11, 72, Jorge Dely Valdes 25)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 41,721. **Ref:** Sibrian (ElS)
Colombia: Mondragon - De la Cuesta, Mendoza, Renteria (Arzuaga 63), Anchico, Castrillon (Benitez 46), Patino, Leal (A Ramirez 39), Aguilar, Passo, Moreno. *Sent off: Mendoza 39min.*
Panama: Penedo - Rivera, Moreno, J A Torres, Baloy, Gomez (Mitre 63), Jorge Dely Valdes (Guardia 55), Blanco, Medina (L Henriquez 69), Phillips, Tejada. *Sent off: Moreno 52min.*

Final

July 24 - East Rutherford
United States 0
Panama 0
Aet. **Att:** 31,018. **Ref:** Batres (Gtm)
United States 3-1 on pens
United States: Keller - Conrad, Hejduk, Vanney, Onyewu, O'Brien, Beasley (Olsen 114), Dempsey (Davis 80), Armas, Donovan, Wolff (Quaranta 62).
Panama: Penedo - Rivera, Moreno, J A Torres, Baloy, Blanco, Gomez, Medina (L Henriquez 87), Mitre (Rodriguez 42), Jorge Dely Valdes, Tejada.

COSAFA CUP

Finals match schedule

In South Africa

Semi-finals
Aug 13: Angola v Zimbabwe.
Aug 13: South Africa v Zambia.

Final
Aug 14

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st qualifying round, 1st legs

July 12

Dinamo Minsk (Bls) 1 (Lentsevich 58)
Anorthosis (Cyp) 1 (Frousos 44)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)

Kairat Almaty (Kaz) 2 (Fomenko 39, Artemov 70)
Artmedia Petrzalka (Slk) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Rogalla (Swi)

Levadia Tallinn (Est) 1 (Nahk pen 45)
Dinamo Tbilisi (Geo) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Courtney (NI)

Neftchi (Aze) 2 (Mamedov 20, Mishura 90)
FH (Ice) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Bebek (Cro)

Rabotnicki Kometal (Mac) 6 (Kralevski 30, Ignatov pen 56, Nuhiji 65, 84, Trajcov 69, Maznov 76)
Skonto Riga (Lat) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Duarte Paixao (Por)

Sliema Wanderers (Mlt) 1 (Bogdanovic 72)
Serif Tiraspol (Mol) 4 (Epureanu 21, 62, Kuchuk 25, Florescu 51)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Ross (NI)

July 13

F91 Dudelange (Lux) 0
Zrinjski (Bos) 1 (B Maric 15)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Attard (Mlt)

Glentoran (NI) 1 (Ward 77)
Shelbourne (Ire) 2 (J Byrne 55, pen 65)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Kasnaferis (Gre)

Gorica (Sln) 2 (M Kovacevic 66, Birsa 82)
SK Tirana (Alb) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Nalbandyan (Arm)

FC Haka (Fin) 1 (Pasoja 26)
Pyunik Yerevan (Arm) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Berezka (Ukr)

HB (Far) 2 (Thorsteinsson 29, av Flotum 47)
FBK Kaunas (Lit) 4 (Velicka 2, 25, Klimek 35, Zelmikas 49)
HT: 1-3. **Ref:** Sandmoen (Nor)

Liverpool (Eng) 3 (Gerrard 8, 21, 89)
Total Network Solutions (Wal) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Van de Velde (Blg)

1st qualifying round, 2nd legs

July 19

Dinamo Tbilisi 2 (Melkadze 48, Orbeladze 50)
Levadia Tallinn 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Supraha (Cro)
Sent off: Odikadze (Dinamo Tbilisi) 76min
Dinamo Tbilisi 2-1 on agg

FBK Kaunas 4 (Velicka 44, Rimkevicius 63, 82, Zelmikas 90)
HB 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Georgiev (Bul)
FBK Kaunas 8-2 on agg

Total Network Solutions 0
Liverpool 3 (Cisse 26, Gerrard 82, 83)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Bertolini (Swi)
Liverpool 6-0 on agg

July 20

Anorthosis 1 (Samaras 71)
Dinamo Minsk 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Brines (Sco)
Anorthosis 2-1 on agg

Artmedia Petrzalka 4 (Borbely 21, Tchur 32, Kozak pen 94, Stano 120)
Kairat Almaty 1 (Bogomolov 91)
Aet. **HT:** 2-0. **90mins:** 2-0. **Ref:** Shmolik (Bls)
Artmedia Petrzalka 4-3 on agg

FH 1 (Borgvardt 60)
Neftchi 2 (Mamedov 51, Nabiyev 75)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Kaldma (Est)
Sent off: Chertoganov (Neftchi) 43min
Neftchi 4-1 on agg

Pyunik Yerevan 2 (Pachajyan 3, Diawara 30)
FC Haka 2 (Mattila 38, Fowler 63)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Corpodean (Rom)
FC Haka 3-2 on agg

Serif Tiraspol 2 (Derme 78, Cocis 83)
Sliema Wanderers 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Culcu (Tur)
Serif 6-1 on agg

Shelbourne 4 (Heary 13, J Byrne pen 32, 71, Crowe 58)
Glentoran 1 (McCann 21)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Sippel (Ger)
Sent off: Leeman (Glentoran) 31min
Shelbourne 6-2 on agg

Skonto Riga 1 (Pereplyotkin 90)
Rabotnicki Kometal 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Jakov (Isr)
Rabotnicki 6-1 on agg

SK Tirana 3 (Rraklli 38, Dabulla 42, Salihi 45)
Gorica 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Coue (Fra)
SK Tirana 3-2 on agg

Zrinjski 0
F91 Dudelange 4 (Gruszczynski 90, 105, Di Gregorio 96, Hug 112)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-1. **Ref:** Gvardis (Rus)
F91 Dudelange 4-1 on agg

2nd qualifying round, 1st legs

July 26

Anderlecht (Blg) 5 (Tihinen 21, Jestrovic 24, Mpenza 32, Goor 35, Vanderhaeghe 77)
Neftchi 0
HT: 4-0. **Ref:** Ceferin (Sln)

Anorthosis 3 (Nicolaou 25, Frousos 83, Tsitaishvili 90)
Trabzonspor (Tur) 1 (Fatih Tekke 75)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Skjerven (Nor)
Sent off: Yattara (Trabzonspor) 45min

Dinamo Tbilisi 0
Brondby (Den) 2 (Skoubo 59, Elmander 83)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Szabo (Hun)
Sent off: Amisulashvili (Dinamo Tbilisi) 40min

FBK Kaunas 1 (Barevicius 21)
Liverpool 3 (Cisse 27, Carragher 30, Gerrard pen 55)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Fisker (Den)

Kyiv Dynamo (Ukr) 2 (Husiev 20, Shatskikh 40)
Thun (Swi) 2 (Rodolfo og 38, Aegerter 66)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Delevic (Ser)

Valerenga (Nor) 1 (Dos Santos pen 50)
FC Haka 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Kelly (Ire)

July 27

Artmedia Petrzalka 5 (Halenar 43, 76, 89, Vascak 57, Mikulic 78)
Celtic (Sco) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Dereli (Tur)

Debrecen (Hun) 3 (Bogdanovic 26, 40, Kerekes 58)
Hajduk Split (Cro) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Kircher (Ger)

F91 Dudelange 1 (Martine 8)
Rapid Wien (Aut) 6 (Lawaree 2, 65, Akagunduz 3, 15, Hofmann 5, Kienast 84)
HT: 1-4. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)

Malmo (Swe) 3 (Osmanovski 33, D Andersson pen 48, Mattisson 68)
Maccabi Haifa (Isr) 2 (Harazi 2, Colautti 44)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Rodriguez Santiago (Spa)

Partizan Belgrade (Ser) 1 (Odita 63)
Serif Tiraspol 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Slupik (Pol)

Rabotnicki Kometal 1 (Nuhiji 12)
Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 1 (Sychev 90)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** McDonald (Sco)

Shelbourne 0
Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 0
Ref: Lajuks (Lat)

SK Tirana 0
CSKA Sofia (Bul) 2 (Gueye 89, Gargorov 90)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Jakobsson (Ice)

3rd qualifying round draw

Anderlecht or Neftchi v Slavia Prague (Cze)
Anorthosis or Trabzonspor v Rangers (Sco)
Artmedia or Celtic v Partizan or Serif
Basle (Swi) v Werder Bremen (Ger)
Betis (Spa) v Monaco (Fra)
Dinamo Tbilisi or Brondby v Ajax (Hol)
Everton (Eng) v Villarreal (Spa)
F91 Dudelange or Rapid Wien v Rabotnicki or Lokomotiv Moscow
FBK Kaunas or Liverpool v SK Tirana or CSKA Sofia
Malmo or Maccabi Haifa v Kyiv Dynamo or Thun
Manchester United (Eng) v Debrecen or Hajduk
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) v Internazionale (Ita)
Shelbourne or Steaua v Rosenborg (Nor)
Sporting Lisbon (Por) v Udinese (Ita)
Valerenga or FC Haka v Club Brugge (Blg)
Wisla Krakow (Pol) v Panathinaikos (Gre)

1st legs - August 9/10; 2nd legs - August 23/24

UEFA CUP

1st qualifying round

1st legs - July 14; 2nd legs - July 28

Allianssi (Fin) v CS Petange (Lux)
3-0, 1-1 (agg 4-1)
FK Baku (Aze) v MSK Zilina (Slk)
1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)
Banants (Arm) v Lokomotivi Tbilisi (Geo)
2-3, 2-0 (agg 4-3)
Baskimi (Mac) v Zepce (Bos)
3-0*, 1-1 (agg 4-1)
Birkirkara (Mlt) v APOEL (Cyp)
0-2, 0-4 (agg 0-6)
Domagnano (SaM) v Domzale (Sln)
0-5, 0-3 (agg 0-8)
Ekranas (Lit) v Cork City (Ire)
0-2, 1-0 (agg 1-2)
Elbasani (Alb) v Vardar (Mac)
1-1, 0-0 (agg 1-1; Vardar on away goals)
Esbjerg (Den) v Flora Tallinn (Est)
1-2, 6-0 (agg 7-2)
Etzella Ettelbruck (Lux) v Keflavik (Ice)
0-4, 0-2 (agg 0-6)
Ferencvaros (Hun) v MTZ-Ripo (Bls)
0-2, 2-1 (agg 2-3)
IBV (Ice) v B36 (Far)
1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)

Linfield (NI) v Ventspils (Lat)
1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2; Linfield on away goals)
Longford Town (Ire) v Carmarthen (Wal)
2-0, 1-5 (agg 3-5)
Mainz (Ger) v Mika Ashtarak (Arm)
4-0, 0-0 (agg 4-0)
Nistru Otaci (Mol) v Hazar Lenkoran (Aze)
3-1, 2-1 (agg 5-2)
NSI (Far) v Metalurgs Liepaja (Lat)
0-3, 0-3 (agg 0-6)
Omonia (Cyp) v Hibernians (Mlt)
3-0, 3-0 (agg 6-0)
Portadown (NI) v Viking (Nor)
1-2, 0-1 (agg 1-3)
Rhyl (Wal) v Atlantas (Lit)
2-1, 2-3 (agg 4-4; Rhyl on away goals)
Sant Julia (And) v Rapid Bucharest (Rom)
0-5, 0-5 (agg 0-10)
Tallinna VMK (Est) v MyPa (Fin)
1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
Teuta (Alb) v Siroki Brijeg (Bos)
3-1, 0-3 (agg 3-4)
Torpedo Kutaisi (Geo) v BATE Borisov (Bls)
0-1, 0-5 (agg 0-6)
Vaduz (Lie) v Dacia (Mol)
2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1)
**Game finished 0-0, but later awarded 3-0 to Baskimi because Zepce fielded ineligible player*

2nd qualifying round draw

APOEL v Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr)
Austria Wien (Aut) v MSK Zilina
Banants v Dnipro (Ukr)
Baskimi v Maccabi Petach Tikva (Isr)
Brann (Nor) v Allianssi
Carmarthen v FC Copenhagen (Den)
Dinamo Bucharest (Rom) v Omonia
Djurgardens (Swe) v Cork City
Domzale v SC Ashdod (Isr)
Esbjerg v Tromso (Nor)
Groclin Grodzisk (Pol) v Banska Bystrica (Slk)
Halmstads (Swe) v Linfield
Inter Zapresic (Cro) v Red Star Belgrade (Ser)
Kryliya Sovetov (Rus) v BATE Borisov
Legia Warsaw (Pol) v Zurich (Swi)
Litex Lovech (Bul) v Rijeka (Cro)
Lokomotiv Plovdiv (Bul) v OFK Belgrade (Ser)
Mainz v Keflavik
Matav Sopron (Hun) v Metalurh Donetsk (Ukr)
Metalurgs Liepaja v Genk (Blg)
Midtjylland (Den) v B36
MTZ-Ripo v Teplice (Cze)
MyPa v Dundee United (Sco)
Nistru Otaci v Grazer AK (Aut)
Pasching (Aut) v Zenit St Petersburg (Rus)
Publikum (Sln) v Levski Sofia (Bul)
Vaduz v Besiktas (Tur)
Vardar v Rapid Bucharest
Viking v Rhyl
Wisla Plock (Pol) v Grasshopper (Swi)
Zeta (Ser) v Siroki Brijeg

1st legs - August 11; 2nd legs - August 25

INTERTOTO CUP

2nd round

1st legs - July 2/3; 2nd legs - July 9/10

Ankaraspor (Tur) v Dubnica (Slk)
0-4, 1-0 (agg 1-4)
CFR Cluj (Rom) v Athletic Bilbao (Spa)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1; Cluj 5-3 on pens)
Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) v Buducnost Podgorica (Ser)
3-0, 1-2 (agg 4-2)
Gent (Blg) v Zlin (Cze)
1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0)
Hamburg (Ger) v Pobeda (Mac)
4-1, 4-1 (agg 8-2)
Lens (Fra) v Lech Poznan (Pol)
2-1, 1-0 (agg 3-1)
Lokeren (Blg) v Young Boys (Swi)
1-4, 1-2 (agg 2-6)
Papa (Hun) v IFK Gothenburg (Swe)
2-3, 0-1 (agg 2-4)
Saint-Etienne (Fra) v Neuchatel Xamax (Swi)
1-1, 2-1 (agg 3-2)
Sigma Olomouc (Cze) v Pogon Szczecin (Pol)
1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0)
Slaven (Cro) v Gloria Bistrita (Rom)
3-2, 1-0 (agg 4-2)
Slovan Liberec (Cze) v Beitar Jerusalem (Isr)
5-1, 2-1 (agg 7-2)
Tampere United (Fin) v Charleroi (Blg)
1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0)
Varteks (Cro) v Inter Turku (Fin)
4-3, 2-2 (agg 6-5)
Wolfsburg (Ger) v Sturm Graz (Aut)
2-2, 3-1 (agg 5-3)
Zalgiris Vilnius (Lit) v Dinaburg (Lat)
2-0, 1-2 (agg 3-2)

3rd round

1st legs - July 16/17; 2nd legs - July 23/24

Aigaleo (Gre) v Zalgiris Vilnius
1-3, 3-2 (agg 4-5)
Borussia Dortmund (Ger) v Sigma Olomouc
1-1, 0-0 (agg 1-1; Sigma Olomouc on away goals)
CFR Cluj v Saint-Etienne
1-1, 2-2 (agg 3-3; CFR Cluj on away goals)
Deportivo La Coruna v Slaven
1-0, 3-0 (agg 4-0)
Dubnica v Newcastle (Eng)
1-3, 0-2 (agg 1-5)
Gent v Valencia (Spa)
0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2)
IFK Gothenburg v Wolfsburg
0-2, 0-2 (agg 0-4)
Lazio (Ita) v Tampere United
3-0, 1-1 (agg 4-1)
Roda JC (Hol) v Slovan Liberec
0-0, 1-1 (agg 1-1; Roda JC on away goals)
Uniao Leiria (Por) v Hamburg
0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3)
Varteks v Lens
1-1, 1-4 (agg 2-5)
Young Boys v Marseille (Fra)
2-3, 1-2 (agg 3-5)

Semi-finals

1st legs - July 27

Deportivo La Coruna 2 Newcastle 1;
Lazio 1 Marseille 1;
Sigma Olomouc 0 Hamburg 1;
Valencia 4 Roda JC 0;
Wolfsburg 0 Lens 0;
Zalgiris Vilnius 1 CFR Cluj 2.

AUSTRIA

July 12: Grazer AK 3 Salzburg 1.
July 13: Rapid Wien 2 Sturm Graz 3; Mattersburg 0 Pasching 0; SV Ried 0 Wacker Tirol 0; Admira 1 Austria Wien 2.
July 19: Wacker Tirol 0 Rapid Wien 3.
July 20: Sturm Graz 2 Admira 1; Pasching 0 SV Ried 0; Salzburg 4 Mattersburg 0; Austria Wien 3 Grazer AK 2.
July 23: Rapid Wien 2 Pasching 0; Sturm Graz 0 Wacker Tirol 0; Mattersburg 1 Austria Wien 2; Admira 1 Grazer AK 2.
July 24: SV Ried 3 Salzburg 0.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Austria Wien	3	3	0	0	7	4	9
Sturm Graz	3	2	1	0	5	3	7
Rapid Wien	3	2	0	1	7	3	6
Grazer AK	3	2	0	1	7	5	6
SV Ried	3	1	2	0	3	0	5
Salzburg	3	1	0	2	5	6	3
Pasching	3	0	2	1	0	2	2
Wacker Tirol	3	0	2	1	0	3	2
Mattersburg	3	0	1	2	1	6	1
Admira	3	0	0	3	3	6	0

CROATIA

July 20: Hajduk 6 Osijek 0; Zagreb 3 Slaven 1; Kamen Ingrad 0 Varteks 1.
July 23: Medimurje 1 Inter 2; Rijeka 2 Pula 2; Cibalia 0 Dinamo 4.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hajduk	1	1	0	0	6	0	3
Dinamo	1	1	0	0	4	0	3
Zagreb	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Inter	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Varteks	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Pula	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Rijeka	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Medimurje	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Kamen Ingrad	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Slaven	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Cibalia	1	0	0	1	0	4	0
Osijek	1	0	0	1	0	6	0

DENMARK

July 19: Esbjerg 2 OB 2.
July 20: Brondby 3 Midtjylland 0; Horsens 0 Viborg 3; Nordsjaelland 1 SonderjyskE 1; Silkeborg 2 AGF 1; AaB 0 FC Copenhagen 1.
July 23: Brondby 2 Silkeborg 0.
July 24: FC Copenhagen 2 Horsens 0; Midtjylland 2 Esbjerg 1; OB 2 AaB 1; SonderjyskE 2 AGF 1; Viborg 3 Nordsjaelland 1.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Viborg	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Brondby	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
FC Copenhagen	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
OB	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
SonderjyskE	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Silkeborg	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Midtjylland	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Esbjerg	2	0	1	1	3	4	1
Nordsjaelland	2	0	1	1	2	4	1
AGF	2	0	0	2	2	4	0
AaB	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Horsens	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

FRANCE

SUPER CUP

July 27 - Abbe Deschamps stadium, Auxerre
Auxerre 1 (Mathis 8)
Lyon 4 (Ben Arfa pen 3, Carew 34, 68, 73)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 11,000. **Ref:** Vileo

NORWAY

July 3: Fredrikstad 1 Start 2; Aalesund 1 Viking 2; Bodo/Glimt 1 Lyn 3; Molde 2 Lillestrom 0; Brann 2 Ham-Kam 0; Tromso 1 Rosenborg 2.
July 4: Valerenga 3 Odd Grenland 0.
July 23: Valerenga 2 Ham-Kam 1; Molde 3 Brann 1.
July 24: Fredrikstad 2 Lyn 1; Aalesund 2 Rosenborg 1; Bodo/Glimt 0 Viking 3; Tromso 0 Odd Grenland 1.
July 25: Lillestrom 2 Start 0.

NORWAY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Start	14	9	3	2	27	15	30
Valerenga	14	8	3	3	23	15	27
Viking	14	8	3	3	23	16	27
Brann	14	7	3	4	29	17	24
Lillestrom	14	7	3	4	21	18	24
Lyn	14	5	6	3	19	13	21
Fredrikstad	14	5	4	5	19	20	19
Rosenborg	14	5	3	6	25	20	18
Molde	14	5	3	6	20	27	18
Ham-Kam	14	4	2	8	13	20	14
Aalesund	14	3	4	7	14	22	13
Tromso	14	2	6	6	13	18	12
Odd Grenland	14	3	3	8	9	25	12
Bodo/Glimt	14	2	4	8	14	23	10

POLAND

July 24: Arka 0 Legia 0.
July 26: Odra 0 Zaglebie 0; Lech 1 Polonia 2; Gornik L 1 Wisla K 1; Pogon 2 Wisla P 0; Korona 0 Cracovia 0; Belchatow 0 Gornik Z 0.
July 27: Groclin 2 Amica 2.

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pogon	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Polonia	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Amica	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Groclin	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Gornik L	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Wisla K	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Arka	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Belchatow	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Cracovia	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Gornik Z	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Korona	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Legia	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Odra	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Zaglebie	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Lech	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Wisla P	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

RUSSIA

July 2: Tom 0 Alaniya 0; Saturn 1 Spartak 1; Shinnik 0 FC Moscow 1; Torpedo 1 Rubin 1; Zenit 5 Amkar 1; Kryliya Sovetov 1 Rostov 1; CSKA 2 Dinamo 0.
July 3: Lokomotiv 4 Terek 0.
July 9: Terek 0 Tom 1; Alaniya 1 CSKA 1; Rostov 0 Zenit 1; Amkar 0 Torpedo 0; Rubin 2 Shinnik 0; FC Moscow 0 Saturn 1; Spartak 1 Lokomotiv 2.
July 10: Dinamo 3 Kryliya Sovetov 1.
July 16: FC Moscow 3 Spartak 1.
July 17: Tom 0 Lokomotiv 0; Terek 1 CSKA 0; Alaniya 2 Kryliya Sovetov 0; Dinamo 1 Zenit 2; Rostov 1 Torpedo 1; Amkar 0 Shinnik 0; Rubin 0 Saturn 0.
July 20: CSKA 2 Torpedo 0.
July 23: Amkar 3 Saturn 2; FC Moscow 0 Lokomotiv 1; Rubin 0 Spartak 0; Shinnik 2 Rostov 1; Zenit 3 Alaniya 1; Kryliya Sovetov 0 Terek 1.
July 24: Torpedo 2 Dinamo 1; CSKA 2 Tom 0.

RUSSIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lokomotiv	19	11	8	0	27	4	41
Zenit	18	9	5	4	30	17	32
CSKA	16	9	4	3	25	7	31
Rubin	17	7	7	3	19	15	28
Spartak	17	7	5	5	27	19	26
FC Moscow	16	7	5	4	17	9	26
Torpedo	17	5	7	5	18	15	22
Dinamo	17	7	1	9	19	27	22
Saturn	17	5	5	7	13	13	20
Shinnik	17	4	8	5	12	15	20
Amkar	17	3	10	4	14	21	19
Kryliya Sovetov	18	4	7	7	15	23	19
Alaniya	17	4	5	8	13	25	17
Tom	17	3	7	7	9	17	16
Terek	17	4	3	10	10	25	15
Rostov	17	2	5	10	10	26	11

SWEDEN

July 3: Hacken 0 Assyriska 2; Landskrona 0 Hammarby 3.
July 4: Elfsborg 1 Kalmar 0; Orgryte 1 Helsingborgs 2; Halmstads 0 Malmo 0.
July 6: Gefle 0 IFK Gothenburg 2.
July 11: Sundsvall 1 Djurgardens 1.
July 17: Helsingborgs 1 Orgryte 0; Hammarby 4 Landskrona 0; Malmo 2 Halmstads 1.
July 18: Assyriska 0 Hacken 1; Djurgardens 4 Sundsvall 0; Kalmar 1 Elfsborg 1.
July 20: IFK Gothenburg 0 Gefle 1.
July 21: Hacken 1 Malmo 0.
July 24: Sundsvall 1 Helsingborgs 1.
July 25: Orgryte 3 Kalmar 3; Elfsborg 1 Assyriska 3; Gefle 1 Hammarby 1.
July 27: Djurgardens 0 Landskrona 1.
July 28: Halmstads 0 IFK Gothenburg 2.

SWEDEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Djurgardens	15	9	3	3	31	16	30
Helsingborgs	15	8	3	4	23	20	27
IFK Gothenburg	15	7	5	3	19	10	26
Malmo	15	8	2	5	17	14	26
Hacken	15	8	1	6	23	16	25
Kalmar	15	6	6	3	16	12	24
Hammarby	15	6	4	5	21	16	22
Elfsborg	15	6	4	5	22	22	22
Halmstads	15	5	3	7	19	21	18
Gefle	15	5	2	8	12	19	17
Landskrona	15	4	4	7	15	29	16
Orgryte	15	4	3	8	19	25	15
Assyriska	15	4	1	10	13	18	13
Sundsvall	15	3	3	9	15	27	12

SWITZERLAND

July 13: Neuchatel Xamax 1 Young Boys 3.
July 16: Basle 1 Schaffhausen 0; Grasshopper 3 Yverdon 2; St Gallen 1 Zurich 3; Thun 2 Aarau 0.
July 20: Yverdon 0 Young Boys 3.
July 22: Thun 3 Basle 0.
July 23: Schaffhausen 1 Neuchatel Xamax 1; Aarau 1 St Gallen 4.
July 24: Zurich 4 Grasshopper 2.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Young Boys	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Thun	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
Zurich	2	2	0	0	7	3	6
St Gallen	2	1	0	1	5	4	3
Grasshopper	2	1	0	1	5	6	3
Basle	2	1	0	1	1	3	3
Schaffhausen	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Neuchatel X	2	0	1	1	2	4	1
Yverdon	2	0	0	2	2	6	0
Aarau	2	0	0	2	1	6	0

UKRAINE

July 12: Illichivets 0 Metalist 2; Vorskla 0 Zakarpattya 0; Metalurh D 5 Stal 0; Chornomorets 1 Arsenal 1; Dnipro 1 Tavriya 3; FC Kharkiv* 1 Kryvbas 1.
July 13: Dynamo 1 Metalurh Z 1; Volyn 0 Shakhtar 1.
July 17: Illichivets 3 Vorskla 2; Tavriya 2 FC Kharkiv 1; Shakhtar 2 Dnipro 0; Metalurh Z 0 Volyn 1; Arsenal 0 Dynamo 2; Stal 0 Chornomorets 1; Zakarpattya 0 Metalurh D 0; Metalist 1 Kryvbas 0.
July 22: Dynamo 4 Stal 0.
July 23: Vorskla 0 Metalist 1; Metalurh D 0 Illichivets 0; Chornomorets 2 Zakarpattya 0; Volyn 2 Arsenal 1; Dnipro 3 Metalurh Z 0; FC Kharkiv 2 Shakhtar 3; Kryvbas 2 Tavriya 0.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	3	3	0	0	6	2	9
Metalist	3	3	0	0	4	0	9
Dynamo	3	2	1	0	7	1	7
Chornomorets	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Tavriya	3	2	0	1	5	4	6
Volyn	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Metalurh D	3	1	2	0	5	0	5
Kryvbas	3	1	1	1	3	2	4
Illichivets	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Dnipro	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
Zakarpattya	3	0	2	1	0	2	2
FC Kharkiv*	3	0	1	2	4	6	1
Vorskla	3	0	1	2	2	4	1
Arsenal	3	0	1	2	2	5	1
Metalurh Z	3	0	1	2	1	5	1
Stal	3	0	0	3	0	10	0

**Formerly Arsenal Kharkiv*

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Final, 1st leg

July 6 - Beira-Rio stadium, Porto Alegre
Atletico Paranaense (Bra) 1 (Aloisio 14)
Sao Paulo (Bra) 1 (Durval og 52)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Atletico Paranaense: Diego - Jancarlos (Andre Rocha 83), Danilo, Durval, Marcao, Cocito, Alan Bahia, Fabricio, Fernandinho (Evandro 66), Aloisio, Lima.
Sao Paulo: Rogerio Ceni - Fabao, Diego Lugano, Alex, Cicinho, Mineiro, Josue, Junior, Danilo, Luizao, Amoroso.

Final, 2nd leg

July 14 - Morumbi stadium, Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo 4 (Amoroso 17, Fabao 53, Luizao 71, Diego Tardelli 89)
Atletico Paranaense 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 75,000. **Ref:** Elizondo (Arg)
Sao Paulo 5-1 on agg
Sao Paulo: Rogerio Ceni - Fabao, Diego Lugano, Alex, Cicinho, Mineiro, Josue, Danilo, Junior (Fabio Santos 85), Luizao (Souza 72), Amoroso (Diego Tardelli 78).
Atletico Paranaense: Diego - Jancarlos, Danilo, Durval, Marcao (Rodrigo 60), Fabricio, Cocito, Andre Rocha (Alan Bahia 82), Evandro, Lima (Fernandinho 60), Aloisio.

ARGENTINA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Saturday, July 2
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Ceresetto 37)
Independiente 1 (Frutos 24)

Quilmes 1 (Torres 16)
Gimnasia LP 1 (Escobar 41)

Racing Club 0
San Lorenzo 1 (Herrera 2)

Sunday, July 3
Almagro 3 (Sparapani 2, Nieto 58, 60)
Boca Juniors 2 (Trejo 13, Cahais 29)

Argentinos Juniors 1 (Cordoba 58)
Banfield 2 (Andrizzi 48, Cvitanich 90)

Arsenal 1 (Mannara 69)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Zarate 84)

Estudiantes 1 (Pavone pen 36)
Rosario Central 1 (Ferrari pen 34)

Instituto 2 (Montalbo 60, Caprari 63)
Colon Santa Fe 0

Lanus 5 (Biglieri 6, Lagos 17, Aguirre 20, Fritzler 35, Graf 70)
Olimpo 0

River Plate 1 (Diogo 48)
Huracan 0

ARGENTINA – CLOSING – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Velez Sarsfield	19	11	6	2	32	14	39
Banfield	19	10	3	6	25	16	33
Racing Club	19	9	5	5	25	17	32
Estudiantes	19	8	7	4	28	23	31
Rosario Central	19	8	7	4	27	24	31
Arsenal	19	8	6	5	27	22	30
Gimnasia LP	19	9	2	8	25	25	29
Lanus	19	7	7	5	36	27	28
Instituto	19	8	4	7	32	30	28
River Plate	19	8	3	8	31	29	27
Colon Santa Fe	19	6	8	5	30	23	26
Independiente	19	6	8	5	29	26	26
Olimpo	19	7	5	7	18	22	26
Newell's OB	19	5	9	5	22	21	24
Boca Juniors	19	6	4	9	26	30	22
San Lorenzo	19	6	4	9	23	29	22
Argentinos Jnrs	19	5	6	8	28	30	21
Quilmes	19	5	5	9	16	23	20
Almagro	19	4	4	11	25	44	16
Huracan	19	0	5	14	12	42	5

TOP GOALSCORERS
16 Mariano Pavone (Estudiantes)
11 Esteban Fuertes (Colon Santa Fe)
10 Nicolas Frutos (Independiente)
9 Jose Calderon (Arsenal)
9 Claudio Enria (Gimnasia LP)
9 Josemir Lujambio (Instituto)

BOLIVIA

TRANSITIONAL TOURNAMENT

June 30: Blooming 0 Bolivar 2.
July 2: Destroyers 2 Aurora 3.
July 3: Iberoamericana 0 Blooming 1; Real Potosi 1 La Paz 3; Jorge Wilstermann 3 Union Central 0; Bolivar 2 San Jose 0; Oriente 1 The Strongest 0.
July 6: The Strongest 2 Union Central 0.
July 10: La Paz 1 Oriente 3; San Jose 2 Iberoamericana 1; Aurora 2 Jorge Wilstermann 1; The Strongest 4 Destroyers 0; Union Central 2 Bolivar 2; Blooming 1 Real Potosi 0.
July 13: Iberoamericana 1 Union Central 1; Real Potosi 2 Oriente 1; Destroyers 4 La Paz 0; Blooming 2 San Jose 0; Jorge Wilstermann 2 The Strongest 3.
July 14: Bolivar 4 Aurora 3.
July 16: La Paz 1 Jorge Wilstermann 1.
July 17: San Jose 2 Real Potosi 2; Aurora 4 Iberoamericana 0; The Strongest 2 Bolivar 1; Union Central 0 Blooming 0; Oriente 1 Destroyers 1.
July 20: Bolivar 0 La Paz 1; Real Potosi 4 Destroyers 0.
July 21: San Jose 2 Union Central 0; Blooming 2 Aurora 0; Iberoamericana 0 The Strongest 4; Jorge Wilstermann 1 Oriente 1.
July 24: La Paz 2 Iberoamericana 0; Destroyers 4 Jorge Wilstermann 0; Aurora 2 San Jose 1; Union Central 4 Real Potosi 0; Oriente 2 Bolivar 1; The Strongest 6 Blooming 0.

BOLIVIA – TRANSITIONAL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolivar	22	13	5	4	55	20	44
The Strongest	22	13	4	5	45	19	43
Oriente	22	12	5	5	39	27	41
Aurora	22	10	5	7	36	31	35
Blooming	22	11	2	9	27	37	35
J Wilstermann	22	10	4	8	34	26	34
La Paz	22	10	3	9	35	33	33
San Jose	22	8	6	8	48	36	30
Real Potosi	22	7	6	9	31	42	27
Destroyers	22	6	3	13	31	54	21
Union Central	22	5	4	13	19	41	19
Iberoamericana	22	1	5	16	11	45	8

BRAZIL

July 2: Ponte Preta 1 Sao Paulo 0; Vasco da Gama 1 Goias 2; Coritiba 3 Paysandu 1; Fluminense 0 Parana 1.
July 3: Santos 0 Juventude 0; Internacional 2 Sao Caetano 1; Figueirense 0 Cruzeiro 0; Fortaleza 2 Corinthians 1; Atletico Mineiro 3 Flamengo 1; Palmeiras 4 Botafogo 1; Brasiliense 2 Atletico Paranaense 1.
July 9: Sao Paulo 2 Flamengo 0; Juventude 2 Brasiliense 1; Parana 3 Figueirense 0; Sao Caetano 2 Ponte Preta 1; Paysandu 1 Fortaleza 2.
July 10: Vasco da Gama 2 Internacional 4; Atletico Paranaense 1 Coritiba 0; Botafogo 1 Fluminense 2; Cruzeiro 2 Atletico Mineiro 1; Corinthians 3 Palmeiras 1; Goias 3 Santos 4.
July 16: Ponte Preta 2 Figueirense 1; Paysandu 1 Cruzeiro 2; Parana 2 Corinthians 3; Fluminense 0 Sao Caetano 1; Goias 1 Brasiliense 3.
July 17: Santos 2 Sao Paulo 1; Internacional 5 Juventude 2; Flamengo 1 Vasco da Gama 0; Coritiba 0 Botafogo 3; Atletico Mineiro 2 Atletico Paranaense 3; Palmeiras 1 Fortaleza 2.
July 20: Santos 2 Vasco da Gama 3; Internacional 2 Goias 3; Figueirense 1 Palmeiras 4; Sao Caetano 1 Parana 1; Fortaleza 1 Atletico Mineiro 3; Atletico Paranaense 3 Fluminense 2; Botafogo 4 Ponte Preta 2; Brasiliense 3 Sao Paulo 3.
July 21: Cruzeiro 2 Coritiba 2; Corinthians 3 Paysandu 2; Flamengo 3 Juventude 4.
July 23: Sao Paulo 0 Sao Caetano 1; Botafogo 1 Brasiliense 1; Goias 2 Fortaleza 1; Parana 2 Atletico Paranaense 0.
July 24: Juventude 1 Figueirense 4; Ponte Preta 2 Fluminense 1; Paysandu 1 Internacional 2; Vasco da Gama 2 Corinthians 3; Coritiba 3 Flamengo 2; Cruzeiro 3 Santos 2; Palmeiras 1 Atletico Mineiro 0.
July 27: Santos 0 Ponte Preta 1; Sao Caetano 0 Botafogo 1; Fortaleza 2 Juventude 0; Atletico Paranaense 7 Vasco da Gama 2; Fluminense 1 Goias 1; Atletico Mineiro 0 Sao Paulo 0; Corinthians 4 Cruzeiro 3.
July 28: Brasiliense 0 Paysandu 0; Internacional 0 Parana 2; Figueirense 0 Coritiba 0; Flamengo 0 Palmeiras 0.

BRAZIL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ponte Preta	15	10	2	3	28	18	32
Corinthians	15	10	1	4	34	29	31
Internacional	15	9	1	5	28	23	28
Botafogo	15	9	1	5	24	19	28
Parana	15	7	4	4	22	14	25
Santos	15	7	3	5	28	21	24
Fluminense	15	7	3	5	22	17	24
Goias	15	7	3	5	23	20	24
Sao Caetano	15	7	3	5	19	18	24
Cruzeiro	15	6	6	3	27	22	24
Juventude	15	6	4	5	25	27	22
Coritiba	15	6	3	6	22	24	21
Fortaleza	15	6	3	6	15	17	21
Palmeiras	15	6	2	7	25	22	20
Brasiliense	15	5	3	7	19	25	18
Sao Paulo	15	4	5	6	20	20	17
At Paranaense	15	4	3	8	19	22	15
Figueirense	15	3	5	7	15	22	14
Flamengo	15	3	4	8	17	25	13
At Mineiro	15	3	3	9	21	24	12
Paysandu	15	3	3	9	19	30	12
Vasco da Gama	15	3	3	9	24	39	12

CHILE

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Final, 1st leg

July 3 - Santa Laura stadium, Santiago
Union Espanola 1 (Neira 76)
Coquimbo Unido 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Pozo

Final, 2nd leg

July 9 - Francisco Sanchez Rumoroso stadium, Coquimbo
Coquimbo Unido 2 (Robles 13, 62)
Union Espanola 3 (Neira 43, Ribera 52, Sierra pen 88)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Selman
Sent off: Jerez (Union Espanola) 81min
Union Espanola 4-2 on agg

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 15: Palestino 4 Santiago Wanderers 0.
July 16: U de Chile 1 U de Concepcion 0; Audax Italiano 0 U Catolica 4.
July 17: Dep Concepcion 1 Rangers 1; Everton 1 Colo Colo 3; Puerto Montt 1 Cobreloa 0; Dep Melipilla 1 Huachipato 0; Dep La Serena 1 San Felipe 1.
July 22: Santiago Wanderers 1 Dep Concepcion 1.
July 23: Huachipato 0 Palestino 0; Colo Colo 1 Dep La Serena 1; Cobreloa 3 Dep Melipilla 1; U Catolica 1 Coquimbo Unido 0.
July 24: U de Concepcion 2 Everton 1; Rangers 3 Puerto Montt 0; Dep Temuco 1 Audax Italiano 0; San Felipe 4 U de Chile 1.

CHILE – CLOSING – GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U Catolica	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
San Felipe	2	1	1	0	5	2	4
Puerto Montt	2	1	0	1	1	3	3
Dep Concepcion	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Huachipato	2	0	1	1	0	1	1

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dep Temuco	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
U de Chile	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Dep La Serena	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
S Wanderers	2	0	1	1	1	5	1
Everton	2	0	0	2	2	5	0

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palestino	2	1	1	0	4	0	4
Rangers	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Cobreloa	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Cobresal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Audax Italiano	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
U Concepcion	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Dep Melipilla	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
U Espanola	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coquimbo U'do	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

COLOMBIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 10: Dep Pasto 2 Tolima 1; Quindio 0 Indep Santa Fe 0; Real Cartagena 3 Once Caldas 0; America 1 At Nacional 0; At Junior 2 Magdalena 1; Indep Medellin 0 Dep Cali 1; Pereira 1 Bucaramanga 0; Millonarios 2 Envigado 1; At Huila 3 Chico 0.
July 16: Dep Cali 4 At Junior 1.
July 17: Tolima 2 At Huila 0; Chico 0 Millonarios 2; Envigado 2 Pereira 1; Bucaramanga 4 Indep Medellin 0; Magdalena 1 America 3; At Nacional 1 Real Cartagena 1; Once Caldas 1 Quindio 0; Indep Santa Fe 2 Dep Pasto 0.
July 23: Millonarios 2 At Huila 0.
July 24: Pereira 2 Chico 0; Indep Medellin 1 Envigado 1; At Junior 0 Bucaramanga 0; Real Cartagena 2 Magdalena 1; Quindio 1 At Nacional 1; Dep Pasto 0 Once Caldas 0; Tolima 2 Indep Santa Fe 1.
July 27: America 2 Dep Cali 0.

COLOMBIA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America	3	3	0	0	6	1	9
Millonarios	3	3	0	0	6	1	9
Real Cartagena	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Dep Cali	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Tolima	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Pereira	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Bucaramanga	3	1	1	1	4	1	4
Indep Santa Fe	3	1	1	1	3	2	4
Envigado	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Dep Pasto	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
At Junior	3	1	1	1	3	5	4
Once Caldas	3	1	1	1	1	3	4
At Huila	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
At Nacional	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Quindio	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
Indep Medellin	3	0	1	2	1	6	1
Magdalena	3	0	0	3	3	7	0
Chico	3	0	0	3	0	7	0

ECUADOR

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP
League stage

July 2: LDU Quito 1 Emelec 0; Barcelona 1 Dep Quevedo 0; LDU Loja 3 Dep Quito 1; Olmedo 1 Aucas 0; Dep Cuenca 2 El Nacional 2.

ECUADOR – OPENING – LEAGUE STAGE – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LDU Quito	18	13	2	3	48	22	41
El Nacional	18	9	6	3	41	27	33
Barcelona	18	7	5	6	19	31	26
Dep Cuenca	18	7	4	7	26	28	25
LDU Loja	18	7	4	7	35	38	25
Dep Quito	18	7	3	8	36	23	24
Aucas	18	7	3	8	22	27	24
Olmedo	18	6	5	7	22	25	23
Emelec	18	5	5	8	24	31	20
Dep Quevedo	18	2	3	13	22	43	9

Top eight qualified for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals, 1st legs

July 6: Olmedo 1 LDU Quito 1; LDU Loja 1 Dep Cuenca 1; Aucas 0 El Nacional 0; Dep Quito 2 Barcelona 0.

Quarter-finals, 2nd legs

July 10: LDU Quito 5 Olmedo 1 *LDU Quito 6-2 on agg*; Dep Cuenca 3 LDU Loja 3 *Agg 4-4. Dep Cuenca on better league stage record*; El Nacional 4 Aucas 0 *El Nacional 4-0 on agg*; Barcelona 2 Dep Quito 0 *Agg 2-2. Barcelona on better league stage record.*

Semi-finals, 1st legs

July 13: Barcelona 1 El Nacional 1; Dep Cuenca 2 LDU Quito 1.

Semi-finals, 2nd legs

July 17: LDU Quito 3 Dep Cuenca 1 *LDU Quito 4-3 on agg*; El Nacional 1 Barcelona 2 *Barcelona 3-2 on agg.*

Final, 1st leg

July 20 - Monumental stadium, Guayaquil
Barcelona 1 (Caicedo 45)
LDU Quito 0
HT: 1-0

Final, 2nd leg

July 24 - Casa Blanco stadium, Quito
LDU Quito 3 (Espinola 5, Salas 63, Reasco 69)
Barcelona 0
HT: 1-0
LDU Quito 3-1 on agg

PERU

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 3: Sport Ancash 2 Cienciano 1; Alianza Lima 0 Union Huaral 0; Universidad SMP 5 At Universidad 0; Universidad CV 0 Coronel Bolognesi 2; Melgar 2 Alianza Atletico 3; Sport Boys 1 Universitario 1.
July 9: Universitario 4 Melgar 0; At Universidad 0 Alianza Lima 1; Coronel Bolognesi 2 Universidad SMP 0.
July 10: Union Huaral 0 Sport Ancash 0; Cienciano 3 Sport Boys 0; Alianza Atletico 1 Sporting Cristal 3.
July 13: Melgar 0 Cienciano 1; Sport Boys 2 Union Huaral 1; Sport Ancash 2 At Universidad 1; Alianza Lima 0 Coronel Bolognesi 0; Universidad SMP 2 Universidad CV 0; Sporting Cristal 2 Universitario 2.
July 16: Coronel Bolognesi 2 Sport Ancash 1; At Universidad 2 Sport Boys 2; Universitario 5 Alianza Atletico 2.
July 17: Union Huaral 0 Melgar 1; Cienciano 2 Sporting Cristal 0; Universidad CV 1 Alianza Lima 1.
July 20: Alianza Atletico 1 Cienciano 1; Sporting Cristal 3 Union Huaral 2; Melgar 1 At Universidad 1; Sport Boys 0 Coronel Bolognesi 2; Sport Ancash 1 Universidad CV 0; Alianza Lima 1 Universidad SMP 1.
July 23: Coronel Bolognesi 3 Melgar 1.
July 24: Universidad SMP 1 Sport Ancash 0; Universidad CV 1 Sport Boys 1; At Universidad 1 Sporting Cristal 2; Union Huaral 2 Alianza Atletico 3; Cienciano 2 Universitario 0.

PERU – OPENING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cienciano	24	16	3	5	37	21	51
Universitario	23	13	8	2	39	19	47
Alianza Lima	23	8	11	4	39	25	35
Sporting Cristal	23	9	8	6	34	28	35
C Bolognesi	23	8	10	5	25	20	34
Sport Ancash	23	10	4	9	28	29	34
Sport Boys	23	8	7	8	29	31	31
Univ SMP	23	7	7	9	25	24	28
Melgar	23	7	6	10	32	40	27
Union Huaral	23	4	8	11	23	31	20
At Universidad	23	4	8	11	25	40	20
Univ CV	23	3	10	10	25	36	19
Alianza Atletico	23	3	10	10	29	46	19

URUGUAY

TRANSITIONAL TOURNAMENT

July 2: Wanderers 2 Danubio 0; Paysandu 3 Rentistas 1; Penarol 1 Miramar Misiones 3 (awarded).
July 3: Nacional 3 Rocha 2; Cerrito 0 Defensor 1; Liverpool 3 River Plate 3; Cerro 2 Tacuarembo 1; Rampla Juniors 0 Plaza 0; Fenix 1 Dep Colonia 2.

URUGUAY – TRANSITIONAL – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional*	17	12	5	0	39	16	41
Defensor*	17	12	5	0	33	13	41
Penarol	17	10	5	2	28	19	35
Danubio	17	8	4	5	23	16	28
Rocha	17	6	7	4	27	21	25
Liverpool	17	7	4	6	26	25	25
Rentistas	17	6	6	5	30	25	24
M Misiones	17	7	2	8	33	29	23
Wanderers	17	6	5	6	30	33	23
River Plate	17	6	4	7	34	32	22
Cerrito	17	5	6	6	21	19	21
Tacuarembo	17	5	6	6	17	18	21
Fenix	17	5	4	8	19	26	19
Paysandu	17	3	5	9	23	34	14
Rampla Jnrs	17	3	5	9	19	31	14
Plaza	17	3	5	9	8	27	14
Cerro	17	3	4	10	20	30	13
Dep Colonia	17	3	4	10	15	31	13

**Nacional and Defensor were scheduled to go into a championship play-off after finishing level on points; however, Nacional won the championship by default after Defensor boycotted the play-off in protest over the nature of Nacional's 3-2 win over Rocha on the final day of the regular season – they scored their winning penalty in the seventh minute of injury time*

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

UNITED STATES

July 2: Chivas USA 0 Chicago Fire 1; Columbus Crew 0 DC United 1; FC Dallas 2 San Jose Earthquakes 2.
July 4: Real Salt Lake 2 MetroStars 2; Colorado Rapids 2 Kansas City Wizards 1; Los Angeles Galaxy 1 New England Revolution 1.
July 9: MetroStars 2 Los Angeles Galaxy 1; Chivas USA 5 Real Salt Lake 1; DC United 0 Kansas City Wizards 1; Columbus Crew 1 San Jose Earthquakes 2; Chicago Fire 1 New England Revolution 0.
July 15: DC United 3 San Jose Earthquakes 0.
July 16: MetroStars 1 Colorado Rapids 1; New England Revolution 3 FC Dallas 2; Chicago Fire 1 Columbus Crew 1; Kansas City Wizards 3 Real Salt Lake 2; Los Angeles Galaxy 2 Chivas USA 0.
July 20: Columbus Crew 1 MetroStars 0; Kansas City Wizards 1 DC United 1; Colorado Rapids 1 San Jose Earthquakes 2.
July 22: Chivas USA 1 New England Revolution 0.
July 23: Real Salt Lake 3 FC Dallas 0; Columbus Crew 2 Kansas City Wizards 0; Colorado Rapids 4 Chicago Fire 1; Los Angeles Galaxy 0 DC United 1; San Jose Earthquakes 2 MetroStars 1.
July 27: MetroStars 3 FC Dallas 2; New England Revolution 1 Los Angeles Galaxy 1.

USA – EASTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New England	19	10	6	3	33	19	36
Chicago Fire	21	11	3	7	35	31	36
DC United	19	8	5	6	27	21	29
Kansas City	20	7	8	5	31	26	29
MetroStars	20	7	7	6	31	26	28
Columbus	19	6	3	10	17	28	21

WESTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Dallas	19	10	4	5	34	25	34
San Jose	20	9	7	4	30	23	34
LA Galaxy	20	8	5	7	25	23	29
Colorado	20	6	3	11	24	27	21
Real Salt Lake	19	4	4	11	18	35	16
Chivas USA	20	3	3	14	21	42	12

LEADING GOALSCORERS
10 Jeff Cunningham (Colorado Rapids)
9 Taylor Twellman (New England Revolution)

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
July 9: Raja Casablanca (Mor) 1 Ajax Cape Town (SAf) 1.
July 10: Enyimba (Nig) 0 Al Ahly (Egy) 1.
July 22: Al Ahly 2 Ajax Cape Town 0.
July 23: Raja Casablanca 1 Enyimba 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahly	3	3	0	0	4	0	9
Raja C'blanca	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Ajax Cape Town	3	0	2	1	2	4	2
Enyimba	3	0	1	2	1	3	1

Group B
July 2: Etoile Sahel (Tun) 0 Esperance (Tun) 0.
July 9: Esperance 0 ASEC Abidjan (IvC) 0.
July 10: Zamalek (Egy) 1 Etoile Sahel 1.
July 24: ASEC Abidjan 1 Etoile Sahel 1; Zamalek 1 Esperance 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zamalek	3	0	3	0	3	3	3
ASEC Abidjan	3	0	3	0	2	2	3
Etoile Sahel	3	0	3	0	2	2	3
Esperance	3	0	3	0	1	1	3

Top two in each group qualify for semi-finals

AFRICAN CONFEDERATION CUP

Group A
July 23: AS Marsa (Tun) 0 FAR Rabat (Mor) 0.
July 24: Fello Star Labe (Gui) 0 King Faisal Babes (Gha) 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
King Faisal B	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
AS Marsa	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
FAR Rabat	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Fello Star Labe	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Group B
July 23: FC 105 Libreville (Gab) 0 Ismaili (Egy) 1.
July 24: Dolphin (Nig) 2 Al Mokawloon (Egy) 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dolphin	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Ismaili	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Al Mokawloon	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
FC 105	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Group winners qualify for Final

ASIA

JAPAN

July 2: Kashiwa Reysol 1 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1; FC Tokyo 2 Cerezo Osaka 2; Jubilo Iwata 1 Kawasaki Frontale 2; Nagoya Grampus Eight 1 Omiya Ardija 1; Gamba Osaka 7 Tokyo Verdy 1969 1; Vissel Kobe 1 JEF United 1; Oita Trinita 0 Yokohama F Marinos 2.
July 3: Kashima Antlers 2 Shimizu S-Pulse 1; Urawa Reds 2 Albirex Niigata 1.
July 6: Omiya Ardija 0 Jubilo Iwata 2; Kashiwa Reysol 0 Oita Trinita 0; Tokyo Verdy 1969 0 Urawa Reds 7; Kawasaki Frontale 0 FC Tokyo 0; Yokohama F Marinos 2 Kashima Antlers 1; Albirex Niigata 3 Vissel Kobe 2; Shimizu S-Pulse 2 Nagoya Grampus Eight 2; Cerezo Osaka 2 JEF United 0; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1 Gamba Osaka 2.
July 9: Kashima Antlers 2 Kawasaki Frontale 0; JEF United 3 Albirex Niigata 2; Urawa Reds 1 Omiya Ardija 2; FC Tokyo 0 Tokyo Verdy 1969 0; Jubilo Iwata 3 Cerezo Osaka 0; Nagoya Grampus Eight 1 Yokohama F Marinos 1; Vissel Kobe 0 Shimizu S-Pulse 3.
July 10: Gamba Osaka 3 Kashiwa Reysol 2; Oita Trinita 0 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1.
July 13: Omiya Ardija 1 Kawasaki Frontale 0; Kashiwa Reysol 3 Urawa Reds 0; Tokyo Verdy 1969 3 Vissel Kobe 3; Yokohama F Marinos 2 JEF United 1; Shimizu S-Pulse 0 FC Tokyo 1; Nagoya Grampus Eight 3 Kashima Antlers 0; Cerezo Osaka 1 Albirex Niigata 0; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0 Jubilo Iwata 0; Oita Trinita 0 Gamba Osaka 2.
July 17: Albirex Niigata 3 Nagoya Grampus Eight 0; Kashima Antlers 1 Oita Trinita 1; FC Tokyo 4 Yokohama F Marinos 0; Kawasaki Frontale 3 Cerezo Osaka 2; Jubilo Iwata 6 Tokyo Verdy 1969 0; Gamba Osaka 3 Shimizu S-Pulse 3; Vissel Kobe 0 Kashiwa Reysol 4.
July 18: Urawa Reds 2 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0; JEF United 2 Omiya Ardija 0.
July 23: Sanfrecce Hiroshima 3 Tokyo Verdy 1969 0; Omiya Ardija 0 Kashima Antlers 2; JEF United 1 Kawasaki Frontale 0; FC Tokyo 1 Vissel Kobe 1; Yokohama F Marinos 0 Kashiwa Reysol 0; Shimizu S-Pulse 0 Urawa Reds 1; Gamba Osaka 4 Cerezo Osaka 1.
July 24: Nagoya Grampus Eight 2 Jubilo Iwata 0; Oita Trinita 1 Albirex Niigata 3.

JAPAN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kashima Antlers	18	12	3	3	31	17	39
Gamba Osaka	18	10	5	3	47	30	35
Urawa Reds	18	8	5	5	28	17	29
Sanfrecce H	18	7	7	4	24	13	28
Jubilo Iwata	18	8	4	6	27	18	28
JEF United	18	7	6	5	30	26	27
Grampus Eight	18	7	6	5	26	23	27
Yokohama FM	18	7	6	5	23	21	27
Omiya Ardija	18	7	3	8	22	25	24
Cerezo Osaka	18	6	5	7	22	28	23
Albirex Niigata	18	6	5	7	25	32	23
Shimizu S-Pulse	18	4	9	5	20	19	21
FC Tokyo	18	5	6	7	23	23	21
K'saki Frontale	18	6	3	9	23	24	21
Kashiwa Reysol	18	4	7	7	19	21	19
Oita Trinita	18	5	3	10	16	26	18
Tokyo Verdy	18	3	7	8	21	46	16
Vissel Kobe	18	2	6	10	18	36	12

SOUTH KOREA

FIRST STAGE

July 2: Incheon 1 Chonbuk 2; Pohang 0 Bucheon 0.
July 3: Gwangju 0 Suwon 2; Ulsan 3 Daegu 1; Songnam 4 Seoul 1; Chunnam 0 Busan 1.
July 6: Daejeon 0 Incheon 1; Gwangju 1 Songnam 1; Ulsan 1 Pohang 3; Suwon 0 Bucheon 0; Busan 1 Seoul 2; Chunnam 1 Chonbuk 1.
July 10: Incheon 3 Songnam 2; Bucheon 2 Ulsan 3; Busan 1 Daejeon 1; Seoul 4 Pohang 1; Daegu 3 Gwangju 2; Suwon 2 Chunnam 1.

SOUTH KOREA – FIRST STAGE – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Busan	12	7	4	1	17	10	25
Incheon	12	7	3	2	20	13	24
Ulsan	12	7	1	4	16	13	22
Pohang	12	6	3	3	14	11	21
Seoul	12	5	4	3	22	19	19
Songnam	12	4	4	4	18	15	16
Bucheon	12	4	4	4	10	10	16
Daejeon	12	2	8	2	11	11	14
Suwon	12	3	5	4	18	19	14
Chunnam	12	3	5	4	13	14	14
Chonbuk	12	2	3	7	13	19	9
Daegu	12	2	3	7	14	25	9
Gwangju	12	1	3	8	16	23	6

OCEANIA

CHAMPIONS CUP

Final

June 10 - Stade Pater, Papeete, Tahiti
Sydney FC (Aus) 2 (Bingley 16, Zdrilic 59)
Magenta (NC) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Fox (NZ)

FIXTURES 2005-06

BELGIUM

Fri, August 5, 2005
Club Brugge v Mouscron

Sat, August 6
Gent v Zulte-Waregem
Beveren v FC Brussels
Lokeren v Genk
Westerlo v Cercle Brugge
Anderlecht v La Louviere
Standard v Lierse
St Truiden v Roeselare

Sun, August 7
Charleroi v Germinal Beerschot

Fri, August 12
La Louviere v Gent

Sat, August 13
Germinal Beerschot v Westerlo
Mouscron v Lokeren
FC Brussels v Club Brugge

Sun, August 14
Roeselare v Beveren
Lierse v St Truiden
Cercle Brugge v Anderlecht
Zulte-Waregem v Standard

Mon, August 15
Genk v Charleroi

Fri, August 19
Standard v St Truiden

Sat, August 20
Gent v Cercle Brugge
Zulte-Waregem v La Louviere
Beveren v Lierse
Club Brugge v Roeselare
Charleroi v Mouscron
Westerlo v Genk
Anderlecht v Germinal Beerschot

Sun, August 21
Lokeren v FC Brussels

Fri, August 26
St Truiden v Beveren

Sat, August 27
Lierse v Club Brugge
Cercle Brugge v Zulte-Waregem
Mouscron v Westerlo
FC Brussels v Charleroi
Roeselare v Lokeren
Germinal Beerschot v Gent

Sun, August 28
Genk v Anderlecht
La Louviere v Standard

Sat, September 10
Gent v Genk
Charleroi v Roeselare
Anderlecht v Mouscron
Standard v Beveren
Westerlo v FC Brussels
Lokeren v Lierse
Zulte-Waregem v Germinal Beerschot
Club Brugge v St Truiden
La Louviere v Cercle Brugge

Sat, September 17
FC Brussels v Anderlecht
Cercle Brugge v Standard
Genk v Zulte-Waregem
Germinal Beerschot v La Louviere
Beveren v Club Brugge
Mouscron v Gent
Lierse v Charleroi
St Truiden v Lokeren

Sun, September 18
Roeselare v Westerlo

Wed, September 21
Gent v FC Brussels
Zulte-Waregem v Mouscron
La Louviere v Genk
Cercle Brugge v Germinal Beerschot
Lokeren v Beveren
Charleroi v St Truiden
Westerlo v Lierse
Anderlecht v Roeselare
Standard v Club Brugge

Sat, September 24
Lierse v Anderlecht
St Truiden v Westerlo
Beveren v Charleroi
Club Brugge v Lokeren
Germinal Beerschot v Standard
Genk v Cercle Brugge
Mouscron v La Louviere
FC Brussels v Zulte-Waregem

Sun, September 25
Roeselare v Gent

Sat, October 1
Germinal Beerschot v Genk
Charleroi v Club Brugge
Westerlo v Beveren
Anderlecht v St Truiden
Standard v Lokeren
Gent v Lierse
Zulte-Waregem v Roeselare
La Louviere v FC Brussels

Sun, October 2
Cercle Brugge v Mouscron

Sat, October 15
Lierse v Zulte-Waregem
St Truiden v Gent
Beveren v Anderlecht
Club Brugge v Westerlo
Lokeren v Charleroi
Genk v Standard
Mouscron v Germinal Beerschot
FC Brussels v Cercle Brugge

Sun, October 16
Roeselare v La Louviere

Sat, October 22
Gent v Beveren
Zulte-Waregem v St Truiden
Genk v Mouscron
Anderlecht v Club Brugge
Standard v Charleroi
Westerlo v Lokeren
Germinal Beerschot v FC Brussels
La Louviere v Lierse

Sun, October 23
Cercle Brugge v Roeselare

Sat, October 29
Lierse v Cercle Brugge
St Truiden v La Louviere
Club Brugge v Gent
Lokeren v Anderlecht
Charleroi v Westerlo
Mouscron v Standard
Beveren v Zulte-Waregem
FC Brussels v Genk

Sun, October 30
Roeselare v Germinal Beerschot

Sat, November 5
Gent v Lokeren
Genk v Roeselare
Anderlecht v Charleroi
Standard v Westerlo
Mouscron v FC Brussels
Germinal Beerschot v Lierse
Zulte-Waregem v Club Brugge
La Louviere v Beveren

Sun, November 6
Cercle Brugge v St Truiden

Sat, November 19
Lierse v Genk
St Truiden v Germinal Beerschot
Beveren v Cercle Brugge
Club Brugge v La Louviere
Lokeren v Zulte-Waregem
Charleroi v Gent
Westerlo v Anderlecht
FC Brussels v Standard

Sun, November 20
Roeselare v Mouscron

Sat, November 26
Zulte-Waregem v Charleroi
Standard v Anderlecht
Gent v Westerlo
FC Brussels v Roeselare
Germinal Beerschot v Beveren
Genk v St Truiden
Mouscron v Lierse
La Louviere v Lokeren

Sun, November 27
Cercle Brugge v Club Brugge

Sat, December 3
Lierse v FC Brussels
St Truiden v Mouscron
Beveren v Genk
Club Brugge v Germinal Beerschot
Lokeren v Cercle Brugge
Charleroi v La Louviere
Westerlo v Zulte-Waregem
Anderlecht v Gent
Standard v Roeselare

Sat, December 10
Gent v Standard
FC Brussels v St Truiden
Zulte-Waregem v Anderlecht
Germinal Beerschot v Lokeren
Genk v Club Brugge
Mouscron v Beveren
La Louviere v Westerlo

Sun, December 11
Cercle Brugge v Charleroi
Roeselare v Lierse

Sat, December 17
Zulte-Waregem v Gent
Mouscron v Club Brugge
Genk v Lokeren
Germinal Beerschot v Charleroi
Lierse v Standard
FC Brussels v Beveren
La Louviere v Anderlecht

Sun, December 18
Roeselare v St Truiden
Cercle Brugge v Westerlo

Sat, January 21, 2006
St Truiden v Lierse
Standard v Zulte-Waregem
Gent v La Louviere
Anderlecht v Cercle Brugge
Westerlo v Germinal Beerschot
Charleroi v Genk
Lokeren v Mouscron
Club Brugge v FC Brussels
Beveren v Roeselare

Sat, January 28
Mouscron v Charleroi
Genk v Westerlo
Lierse v Beveren
FC Brussels v Lokeren
Germinal Beerschot v Anderlecht
St Truiden v Standard
La Louviere v Zulte-Waregem

Sun, January 29
Cercle Brugge v Gent
Roeselare v Club Brugge

Sat, February 4
Club Brugge v Lierse
Beveren v St Truiden
Standard v La Louviere
Zulte-Waregem v Cercle Brugge
Gent v Germinal Beerschot
Anderlecht v Genk
Westerlo v Mouscron
Charleroi v FC Brussels
Lokeren v Roeselare

Sat, February 11
Genk v Gent
FC Brussels v Westerlo
Beveren v Standard
Mouscron v Anderlecht
Germinal Beerschot v Zulte-Waregem
St Truiden v Club Brugge
Lierse v Lokeren

Sun, February 12
Cercle Brugge v La Louviere
Roeselare v Charleroi

Sat, February 18
Charleroi v Lierse
Lokeren v St Truiden
Club Brugge v Beveren
Westerlo v Roeselare
Anderlecht v FC Brussels
Gent v Mouscron
Zulte-Waregem v Genk
Standard v Cercle Brugge
La Louviere v Germinal Beerschot

Sat, February 25
FC Brussels v Gent
Club Brugge v Standard
Mouscron v Zulte-Waregem
Genk v La Louviere
Germinal Beerschot v Cercle Brugge
Beveren v Lokeren
St Truiden v Charleroi
Lierse v Westerlo

Sun, February 26
Roeselare v Anderlecht

Sat, March 4
Anderlecht v Lierse
Gent v Roeselare
Zulte-Waregem v FC Brussels
Westerlo v St Truiden
Charleroi v Beveren
Lokeren v Club Brugge
Standard v Germinal Beerschot
La Louviere v Mouscron

Sun, March 5
Cercle Brugge v Genk

Sat, March 11
Lierse v Gent
Mouscron v Cercle Brugge
Genk v Germinal Beerschot
Beveren v Westerlo
Lokeren v Standard
St Truiden v Anderlecht
Club Brugge v Charleroi
FC Brussels v La Louviere

Sun, March 12
Roeselare v Zulte-Waregem

Sat, March 18
Zulte-Waregem v Lierse
Gent v St Truiden
Anderlecht v Beveren
Westerlo v Club Brugge
Charleroi v Lokeren
Standard v Genk
Germinal Beerschot v Mouscron
Cercle Brugge v FC Brussels
La Louviere v Roeselare

Sat, March 25
Charleroi v Standard
Beveren v Gent
Mouscron v Genk
Club Brugge v Anderlecht
Lokeren v Westerlo
FC Brussels v Germinal Beerschot
St Truiden v Zulte-Waregem
Lierse v La Louviere

Sun, March 26
Roeselare v Cercle Brugge

Sat, April 1
Cercle Brugge v Lierse
Westerlo v Charleroi
Genk v FC Brussels
Germinal Beerschot v Roeselare
Standard v Mouscron
Anderlecht v Lokeren
Zulte-Waregem v Beveren
Gent v Club Brugge
La Louviere v St Truiden

Sat, April 8
Lokeren v Gent
Club Brugge v Zulte-Waregem
Beveren v La Louviere
St Truiden v Cercle Brugge
Westerlo v Standard
Charleroi v Anderlecht
FC Brussels v Mouscron
Lierse v Germinal Beerschot

Sun, April 9
Roeselare v Genk

Sat, April 15
Standard v FC Brussels
Zulte-Waregem v Lokeren
Gent v Charleroi
Mouscron v Roeselare
Anderlecht v Westerlo
Genk v Lierse
Germinal Beerschot v St Truiden
Cercle Brugge v Beveren
La Louviere v Club Brugge

Sat, April 22
Westerlo v Gent
Charleroi v Zulte-Waregem
Anderlecht v Standard
Lokeren v La Louviere
Club Brugge v Cercle Brugge
Beveren v Germinal Beerschot
St Truiden v Genk
Lierse v Mouscron

Sun, April 23
Roeselare v FC Brussels

Sun, April 30
FC Brussels v Lierse
Mouscron v St Truiden
Genk v Beveren
Germinal Beerschot v Club Brugge
Cercle Brugge v Lokeren
La Louviere v Charleroi
Zulte-Waregem v Westerlo
Gent v Anderlecht
Roeselare v Standard

Sat, May 6
Lokeren v Germinal Beerschot
Club Brugge v Genk
Beveren v Mouscron
St Truiden v FC Brussels
Lierse v Roeselare
Standard v Gent
Anderlecht v Zulte-Waregem
Westerlo v La Louviere
Charleroi v Cercle Brugge

CZECH REPUBLIC

Fri, August 5, 2005
Slavia v Jihlava

Sat, August 6
Plzen v Sparta
Zlin v Chmel Blsany

Sun, August 7
Most v Teplice
Mlada Boleslav v Liberec
Pribram v Brno
Jablonec v Slovacko

Mon, August 8
Olomouc v Ostrava

Sat, August 13
Ostrava v Zlin
Slovacko v Mlada Boleslav
Sparta v Most

Sun, August 14
Teplice v Slavia
Chmel Blsany v Plzen
Jihlava v Pribram
Jablonec v Olomouc

Mon, August 15
Brno v Liberec

Sat, August 20
Liberec v Sparta
Slavia v Jablonec
Zlin v Slovacko

Sun, August 21
Brno v Jihlava
Most v Ostrava
Mlada Boleslav v Chmel Blsany
Pribram v Teplice
Plzen v Olomouc

Sat, August 27
Ostrava v Mlada Boleslav
Slovacko v Most
Sparta v Brno

Sun, August 28
Teplice v Zlin
Chmel Blsany v Pribram
Jihlava v Liberec
Olomouc v Slavia
Jablonec v Plzen

Sat, September 10
Liberec v Slovacko
Sparta v Jihlava
Zlin v Jablonec

Sun, September 11
Mlada Boleslav v Teplice
Pribram v Olomouc
Plzen v Slavia
Most v Chmel Blsany
Brno v Ostrava

Sat, September 17
Slavia v Zlin
Slovacko v Sparta
Ostrava v Liberec

Sun, September 18
Jablonec v Pribram
Olomouc v Mlada Boleslav
Jihlava v Most
Chmel Blsany v Brno
Teplice v Plzen

Sat, September 24
Liberec v Chmel Blsany
Sparta v Ostrava
Zlin v Plzen

Sun, September 25
Pribram v Slavia
Mlada Boleslav v Jablonec
Most v Olomouc
Brno v Teplice
Jihlava v Slovacko

Sat, October 1
Slavia v Mlada Boleslav
Slovacko v Brno
Ostrava v Pribram

Sun, October 2
Jablonec v Liberec
Olomouc v Zlin
Plzen v Most
Chmel Blsany v Jihlava
Teplice v Sparta

Sat, October 15
Liberec v Olomouc
Slovacko v Ostrava
Sparta v Chmel Blsany

Sun, October 16
Pribram v Zlin
Mlada Boleslav v Plzen
Most v Slavia
Brno v Jablonec
Jihlava v Teplice

Sat, October 22
Slavia v Sparta
Zlin v Mlada Boleslav
Ostrava v Jihlava

Sun, October 23
Jablonec v Most
Olomouc v Brno
Plzen v Pribram
Chmel Blsany v Slovacko
Teplice v Liberec

Sat, October 29
Liberec v Plzen
Sparta v Olomouc
Slovacko v Teplice
Ostrava v Chmel Blsany

Sun, October 30
Mlada Boleslav v Pribram
Most v Zlin
Brno v Slavia
Jihlava v Jablonec

Sat, November 5
Slavia v Slovacko
Zlin v Brno

Sun, November 6
Jablonec v Sparta
Olomouc v Chmel Blsany
Plzen v Jihlava
Pribram v Liberec
Mlada Boleslav v Most
Teplice v Ostrava

Sat, November 19
Liberec v Slavia
Slovacko v Olomouc
Sparta v Mlada Boleslav
Ostrava v Jablonec

Sun, November 20
Most v Pribram
Brno v Plzen
Jihlava v Zlin
Chmel Blsany v Teplice

Sat, November 26
Slavia v Chmel Blsany
Zlin v Sparta

Sun, November 27
Jablonec v Teplice
Olomouc v Jihlava
Plzen v Ostrava
Pribram v Slovacko
Mlada Boleslav v Brno
Most v Liberec

Sat, December 3
Liberec v Zlin
Ostrava v Slavia
Slovacko v Plzen
Sparta v Pribram

Sun, December 4
Brno v Most
Jihlava v Mlada Boleslav
Chmel Blsany v Jablonec
Teplice v Olomouc

Sun, December 11
Olomouc v Jablonec
Slavia v Teplice
Plzen v Chmel Blsany
Zlin v Ostrava
Pribram v Jihlava
Mlada Boleslav v Slovacko
Most v Sparta
Liberec v Brno

Sun, February 12, 2006
Jablonec v Slavia
Olomouc v Plzen
Sparta v Liberec
Jihlava v Brno
Slovacko v Zlin
Ostrava v Most
Chmel Blsany v Mlada Boleslav
Teplice v Pribram

Sun, February 19
Slavia v Olomouc
Plzen v Jablonec
Zlin v Teplice
Pribram v Chmel Blsany
Mlada Boleslav v Ostrava
Most v Slovacko
Liberec v Jihlava
Brno v Sparta

Sun, February 26
Jablonec v Zlin
Olomouc v Pribram
Slavia v Plzen
Jihlava v Sparta
Slovacko v Liberec
Ostrava v Brno
Chmel Blsany v Most
Teplice v Mlada Boleslav

Sun, March 5
Plzen v Teplice
Zlin v Slavia
Pribram v Jablonec
Mlada Boleslav v Olomouc
Most v Jihlava
Liberec v Ostrava
Brno v Chmel Blsany
Sparta v Slovacko

Sun, March 12
Jablonec v Mlada Boleslav
Olomouc v Most
Slavia v Pribram
Plzen v Zlin
Slovacko v Jihlava
Ostrava v Sparta
Chmel Blsany v Liberec
Teplice v Brno

Sun, March 19
Zlin v Olomouc
Pribram v Ostrava
Mlada Boleslav v Slavia
Most v Plzen
Liberec v Jablonec
Brno v Slovacko
Sparta v Teplice
Jihlava v Chmel Blsany

Sun, March 26
Jablonec v Brno
Olomouc v Liberec
Slavia v Most
Plzen v Mlada Boleslav
Zlin v Pribram
Ostrava v Slovacko
Chmel Blsany v Sparta
Teplice v Jihlava

Sun, April 2
Pribram v Plzen
Mlada Boleslav v Zlin
Most v Jablonec
Liberec v Teplice
Brno v Olomouc
Sparta v Slavia
Jihlava v Ostrava
Slovacko v Chmel Blsany

Sun, April 9
Jablonec v Jihlava
Olomouc v Sparta
Slavia v Brno
Plzen v Liberec
Zlin v Most
Pribram v Mlada Boleslav
Chmel Blsany v Ostrava
Teplice v Slovacko

Sun, April 16
Most v Mlada Boleslav
Liberec v Pribram
Brno v Zlin
Sparta v Jablonec
Jihlava v Plzen
Slovacko v Slavia
Ostrava v Teplice
Chmel Blsany v Olomouc

Sun, April 23
Jablonec v Ostrava
Olomouc v Slovacko
Slavia v Liberec
Plzen v Brno
Zlin v Jihlava
Pribram v Most
Mlada Boleslav v Sparta
Teplice v Chmel Blsany

Sun, April 30
Liberec v Most
Brno v Mlada Boleslav
Sparta v Zlin
Jihlava v Olomouc
Slovacko v Pribram
Ostrava v Plzen
Chmel Blsany v Slavia
Teplice v Jablonec

Sun, May 7
Jablonec v Chmel Blsany
Olomouc v Teplice
Slavia v Ostrava
Plzen v Slovacko
Zlin v Liberec
Pribram v Sparta
Mlada Boleslav v Jihlava
Most v Brno

Sun, May 14
Liberec v Mlada Boleslav
Brno v Pribram
Sparta v Plzen
Jihlava v Slavia
Slovacko v Jablonec
Ostrava v Olomouc
Chmel Blsany v Zlin
Teplice v Most

FRANCE

Fri, July 29, 2005
Paris SG v Metz

Sat, July 30
Lille v Rennes
Marseille v Bordeaux
Nancy v Monaco
Nantes v Lens
Nice v Troyes
Sochaux v Toulouse
Saint-Etienne v Ajaccio
Strasbourg v Auxerre

Sun, July 31
Le Mans v Lyon

Sat, August 6
Ajaccio v Lille
Bordeaux v Nancy
Lens v Marseille
Metz v Le Mans
Monaco v Auxerre
Sochaux v Paris SG
Toulouse v Nice
Troyes v Saint-Etienne

Sun, August 7
Lyon v Strasbourg
Rennes v Nantes

Sat, August 13
Auxerre v Bordeaux
Le Mans v Rennes
Lille v Troyes
Nancy v Lens
Nantes v Ajaccio
Nice v Sochaux
Paris SG v Toulouse
Saint-Etienne v Metz

Sun, August 14
Marseille v Lyon
Strasbourg v Monaco

Sat, August 20
Ajaccio v Le Mans
Bordeaux v Monaco
Lens v Auxerre
Lyon v Nancy
Metz v Strasbourg
Nice v Nantes
Rennes v Marseille
Sochaux v Lille
Toulouse v Saint-Etienne
Troyes v Paris SG

Sat, August 27
Auxerre v Lyon
Le Mans v Troyes
Lille v Toulouse
Marseille v Ajaccio
Nancy v Rennes
Nantes v Metz
Paris SG v Nice
Saint-Etienne v Sochaux
Strasbourg v Bordeaux

Sun, August 28
Monaco v Lens

Sat, September 10
Ajaccio v Nancy
Lens v Bordeaux
Lyon v Monaco
Metz v Lille
Nice v Saint-Etienne
Paris SG v Strasbourg
Rennes v Auxerre
Sochaux v Marseille
Toulouse v Le Mans
Troyes v Nantes

Sat, September 17
Auxerre v Ajaccio
Bordeaux v Lyon
Le Mans v Sochaux
Lille v Nice
Marseille v Troyes
Monaco v Rennes
Nancy v Metz
Nantes v Toulouse
Saint-Etienne v Paris SG
Strasbourg v Lens

Wed, September 21
Ajaccio v Strasbourg
Lyon v Lens
Metz v Auxerre
Nice v Le Mans
Paris SG v Lille
Rennes v Bordeaux
Sochaux v Nantes
Saint-Etienne v Nancy
Toulouse v Marseille
Troyes v Monaco

Sat, September 24
Auxerre v Sochaux
Bordeaux v Ajaccio
Le Mans v Paris SG
Lens v Rennes
Lille v Saint-Etienne
Marseille v Metz
Monaco v Nice
Nancy v Troyes
Nantes v Lyon
Strasbourg v Toulouse

Sat, October 1
Ajaccio v Lens
Lille v Monaco
Metz v Bordeaux
Nice v Marseille
Paris SG v Nantes
Rennes v Lyon
Sochaux v Nancy
Saint-Etienne v Le Mans
Toulouse v Auxerre
Troyes v Strasbourg

Sat, October 15
Auxerre v Troyes
Bordeaux v Sochaux
Le Mans v Lille
Lens v Nice
Lyon v Ajaccio
Marseille v Paris SG
Monaco v Metz
Nancy v Toulouse
Nantes v Saint-Etienne
Strasbourg v Rennes

Sat, October 22
Ajaccio v Rennes
Le Mans v Strasbourg
Lille v Nantes
Metz v Lyon
Nice v Auxerre
Paris SG v Nancy
Sochaux v Monaco
Saint-Etienne v Marseille
Toulouse v Bordeaux
Troyes v Lens

Sat, October 29
Auxerre v Paris SG
Bordeaux v Troyes
Lens v Toulouse
Lyon v Sochaux
Marseille v Lille
Monaco v Ajaccio
Nancy v Nice
Nantes v Le Mans
Rennes v Metz
Strasbourg v Saint-Etienne

Sat, November 5
Le Mans v Marseille
Lille v Strasbourg
Metz v Ajaccio
Nantes v Nancy
Nice v Bordeaux
Paris SG v Monaco
Sochaux v Lens
Saint-Etienne v Auxerre
Toulouse v Lyon
Troyes v Rennes

Sat, November 19
Ajaccio v Sochaux
Auxerre v Lille
Bordeaux v Paris SG
Lens v Metz
Lyon v Troyes
Marseille v Nantes
Monaco v Saint-Etienne
Nancy v Le Mans
Rennes v Toulouse
Strasbourg v Nice

Sat, November 26
Le Mans v Auxerre
Lille v Nancy
Marseille v Monaco
Nantes v Strasbourg
Nice v Lyon
Paris SG v Lens
Sochaux v Rennes
Saint-Etienne v Bordeaux
Toulouse v Ajaccio
Troyes v Metz

Sat, December 3
Ajaccio v Troyes
Auxerre v Nantes
Bordeaux v Lille
Lens v Saint-Etienne
Lyon v Paris SG
Metz v Toulouse
Monaco v Le Mans
Nancy v Marseille
Rennes v Nice
Strasbourg v Sochaux

Sat, December 10
Le Mans v Bordeaux
Lille v Lens
Marseille v Auxerre
Nancy v Strasbourg
Nantes v Monaco
Nice v Ajaccio
Paris SG v Rennes
Sochaux v Metz
Saint-Etienne v Lyon
Toulouse v Troyes

Sat, December 17
Ajaccio v Paris SG
Auxerre v Nancy
Bordeaux v Nantes
Lens v Le Mans
Lyon v Lille
Metz v Nice
Monaco v Toulouse
Rennes v Saint-Etienne
Strasbourg v Marseille
Troyes v Sochaux

Wed, January 4, 2006
Auxerre v Monaco
Le Mans v Metz
Lille v Ajaccio
Marseille v Lens
Nancy v Bordeaux
Nantes v Rennes
Nice v Toulouse
Paris SG v Sochaux
Saint-Etienne v Troyes
Strasbourg v Lyon

Wed, January 11
Ajaccio v Nantes
Bordeaux v Auxerre
Lens v Nancy
Lyon v Marseille
Metz v Saint-Etienne
Monaco v Strasbourg
Rennes v Le Mans
Sochaux v Nice
Toulouse v Paris SG
Troyes v Lille

Sat, January 14
Auxerre v Lens
Le Mans v Ajaccio
Lille v Sochaux
Marseille v Rennes
Monaco v Bordeaux
Nancy v Lyon
Nantes v Nice
Paris SG v Troyes
Saint-Etienne v Toulouse
Strasbourg v Metz

Sat, January 21
Ajaccio v Marseille
Bordeaux v Strasbourg
Lens v Monaco
Lyon v Auxerre
Metz v Nantes
Nice v Paris SG
Rennes v Nancy
Sochaux v Saint-Etienne
Toulouse v Lille
Troyes v Le Mans

Sat, January 28
Auxerre v Rennes
Bordeaux v Lens
Le Mans v Toulouse
Lille v Metz
Marseille v Sochaux
Monaco v Lyon
Nancy v Ajaccio
Nantes v Troyes
Saint-Etienne v Nice
Strasbourg v Paris SG

Sat, February 4
Ajaccio v Auxerre
Lens v Strasbourg
Lyon v Bordeaux
Metz v Nancy
Nice v Lille
Paris SG v Saint-Etienne
Rennes v Monaco
Sochaux v Le Mans
Toulouse v Nantes
Troyes v Marseille

Sat, February 11
Auxerre v Metz
Bordeaux v Rennes
Le Mans v Nice
Lens v Lyon
Lille v Paris SG
Marseille v Toulouse
Monaco v Troyes
Nancy v Saint-Etienne
Nantes v Sochaux
Strasbourg v Ajaccio

Sat, February 18
Ajaccio v Bordeaux
Lyon v Nantes
Metz v Marseille
Nice v Monaco
Paris SG v Le Mans
Rennes v Lens
Sochaux v Auxerre
Saint-Etienne v Lille
Toulouse v Strasbourg
Troyes v Nancy

Sat, February 25
Auxerre v Toulouse
Bordeaux v Metz
Le Mans v Saint-Etienne
Lens v Ajaccio
Lyon v Rennes
Marseille v Nice
Monaco v Lille
Nancy v Sochaux
Nantes v Paris SG
Strasbourg v Troyes

Sat, March 4
Ajaccio v Lyon
Lille v Le Mans
Metz v Monaco
Nice v Lens
Paris SG v Marseille
Rennes v Strasbourg
Sochaux v Bordeaux
Saint-Etienne v Nantes
Toulouse v Nancy
Troyes v Auxerre

Sat, March 11
Auxerre v Nice
Bordeaux v Toulouse
Lens v Troyes
Lyon v Metz
Marseille v Saint-Etienne
Monaco v Sochaux
Nancy v Paris SG
Nantes v Lille
Rennes v Ajaccio
Strasbourg v Le Mans

Sat, March 18
Ajaccio v Monaco
Le Mans v Nantes
Lille v Marseille
Metz v Rennes
Paris SG v Auxerre
Sochaux v Lyon
Saint-Etienne v Strasbourg
Toulouse v Lens
Troyes v Bordeaux
Nice v Nancy

Sat, March 25
Ajaccio v Metz
Auxerre v Saint-Etienne
Bordeaux v Nice
Lens v Sochaux
Lyon v Toulouse
Marseille v Le Mans
Monaco v Paris SG
Nancy v Nantes
Rennes v Troyes
Strasbourg v Lille

Sat, April 1
Le Mans v Nancy
Lille v Auxerre
Metz v Lens
Nantes v Marseille
Nice v Strasbourg
Paris SG v Bordeaux
Sochaux v Ajaccio
Saint-Etienne v Monaco
Toulouse v Rennes
Troyes v Lyon

Sat, April 8
Ajaccio v Toulouse
Auxerre v Le Mans
Bordeaux v Saint-Etienne
Lens v Paris SG
Lyon v Nice
Metz v Troyes
Monaco v Marseille
Nancy v Lille
Rennes v Sochaux
Strasbourg v Nantes

Sat, April 15
Le Mans v Monaco
Lille v Bordeaux
Marseille v Nancy
Nantes v Auxerre
Nice v Rennes
Paris SG v Lyon
Sochaux v Strasbourg
Saint-Etienne v Lens
Toulouse v Metz
Troyes v Ajaccio

Sat, April 29
Ajaccio v Nice
Auxerre v Marseille
Bordeaux v Le Mans
Lens v Lille
Lyon v Saint-Etienne
Metz v Sochaux
Monaco v Nantes
Rennes v Paris SG
Strasbourg v Nancy
Troyes v Toulouse

Sat, May 6
Le Mans v Lens
Lille v Lyon
Marseille v Strasbourg
Nancy v Auxerre
Nantes v Bordeaux
Nice v Metz
Paris SG v Ajaccio
Sochaux v Troyes
Saint-Etienne v Rennes
Toulouse v Monaco

Sat, May 13
Ajaccio v Saint-Etienne
Auxerre v Strasbourg
Bordeaux v Marseille
Lens v Nantes
Lyon v Le Mans
Metz v Paris SG
Monaco v Nancy
Rennes v Lille
Toulouse v Sochaux
Troyes v Nice

GERMANY

Fri, August 5, 2005
Bayern Munich v Monchengladbach

Sat, August 6
Werder Bremen v Arminia Bielefeld
Hannover v Hertha
Wolfsburg v Dortmund
Duisburg v Stuttgart
Koln v Mainz
Hamburg v Nurnberg

Sun, August 7
Eintracht Frankfurt v Leverkusen
Schalke v Kaiserslautern

Sat, August 13
Nurnberg v Hannover
Arminia Bielefeld v Hamburg
Kaiserslautern v Duisburg
Dortmund v Schalke
Monchengladbach v Wolfsburg
Leverkusen v Bayern Munich
Hertha v Eintracht Frankfurt

Sun, August 14
Mainz v Werder Bremen
Stuttgart v Koln

Sat, August 27
Werder Bremen v Stuttgart
Eintracht Frankfurt v Nurnberg
Bayern Munich v Hertha
Wolfsburg v Leverkusen
Schalke v Monchengladbach
Koln v Kaiserslautern
Hamburg v Hannover

Sun, August 28
Arminia Bielefeld v Mainz
Duisburg v Dortmund

Sat, September 10
Nurnberg v Bayern Munich
Hannover v Eintracht Frankfurt
Mainz v Hamburg
Stuttgart v Arminia Bielefeld
Kaiserslautern v Werder Bremen
Monchengladbach v Duisburg
Leverkusen v Schalke

Sun, September 11
Dortmund v Koln
Hertha v Wolfsburg

Sat, September 17
Werder Bremen v Dortmund
Arminia Bielefeld v Kaiserslautern
Mainz v Stuttgart
Bayern Munich v Hannover
Wolfsburg v Nurnberg
Schalke v Hertha
Duisburg v Leverkusen
Koln v Monchengladbach
Hamburg v Eintracht Frankfurt

Wed, September 21
Nurnberg v Schalke
Hannover v Wolfsburg
Eintracht Frankfurt v Bayern Munich
Stuttgart v Hamburg
Kaiserslautern v Mainz
Dortmund v Arminia Bielefeld
Monchengladbach v Werder Bremen
Leverkusen v Koln
Hertha v Duisburg

Sat, September 24
Werder Bremen v Leverkusen
Arminia Bielefeld v Monchengladbach
Mainz v Dortmund
Stuttgart v Kaiserslautern
Wolfsburg v Eintracht Frankfurt
Schalke v Hannover
Duisburg v Nurnberg
Koln v Hertha
Hamburg v Bayern Munich

Sat, October 1
Nurnberg v Koln
Hannover v Duisburg
Eintracht Frankfurt v Schalke
Bayern Munich v Wolfsburg
Kaiserslautern v Hamburg
Dortmund v Stuttgart
Monchengladbach v Mainz
Leverkusen v Arminia Bielefeld
Hertha v Werder Bremen

Sat, October 15
Werder Bremen v Nurnberg
Arminia Bielefeld v Hertha
Mainz v Leverkusen
Stuttgart v Monchengladbach
Kaiserslautern v Dortmund
Schalke v Bayern Munich
Duisburg v Eintracht Frankfurt
Koln v Hannover
Hamburg v Wolfsburg

Sat, October 22
Nurnberg v Arminia Bielefeld
Hannover v Werder Bremen
Eintracht Frankfurt v Koln
Bayern Munich v Duisburg
Wolfsburg v Schalke
Dortmund v Hamburg
Monchengladbach v Kaiserslautern
Leverkusen v Stuttgart
Hertha v Mainz

Sat, October 29
Werder Bremen v Eintracht Frankfurt
Arminia Bielefeld v Hannover
Mainz v Nurnberg
Stuttgart v Hertha
Kaiserslautern v Leverkusen
Dortmund v Monchengladbach
Duisburg v Wolfsburg
Koln v Bayern Munich
Hamburg v Schalke

Sat, November 5
Nurnberg v Stuttgart
Hannover v Mainz
Eintracht Frankfurt v Arminia Bielefeld
Bayern Munich v Werder Bremen
Wolfsburg v Koln
Schalke v Duisburg
Monchengladbach v Hamburg
Leverkusen v Dortmund
Hertha v Kaiserslautern

Sat, November 19
Werder Bremen v Wolfsburg
Arminia Bielefeld v Bayern Munich
Mainz v Eintracht Frankfurt
Stuttgart v Hannover
Kaiserslautern v Nurnberg
Dortmund v Hertha
Monchengladbach v Leverkusen
Koln v Schalke
Hamburg v Duisburg

Sat, November 26
Nurnberg v Dortmund
Hannover v Kaiserslautern
Eintracht Frankfurt v Stuttgart
Bayern Munich v Mainz
Wolfsburg v Arminia Bielefeld
Schalke v Werder Bremen
Duisburg v Koln
Leverkusen v Hamburg
Hertha v Monchengladbach

Sat, December 3
Werder Bremen v Duisburg
Arminia Bielefeld v Schalke
Mainz v Wolfsburg
Stuttgart v Bayern Munich
Kaiserslautern v Eintracht Frankfurt
Dortmund v Hannover
Monchengladbach v Nurnberg
Leverkusen v Hertha
Hamburg v Koln

Sat, December 10
Nurnberg v Leverkusen
Hannover v Monchengladbach
Eintracht Frankfurt v Dortmund
Bayern Munich v Kaiserslautern
Wolfsburg v Stuttgart
Schalke v Mainz
Duisburg v Arminia Bielefeld
Koln v Werder Bremen
Hamburg v Hertha

Sat, December 17
Werder Bremen v Hamburg
Arminia Bielefeld v Koln
Mainz v Duisburg
Stuttgart v Schalke
Kaiserslautern v Wolfsburg
Dortmund v Bayern Munich
Monchengladbach v Eintracht Frankfurt
Leverkusen v Hannover
Hertha v Nurnberg

Sat, January 28, 2006
Arminia Bielefeld v Werder Bremen
Hertha v Hannover
Leverkusen v Eintracht Frankfurt
Monchengladbach v Bayern Munich
Dortmund v Wolfsburg
Kaiserslautern v Schalke
Stuttgart v Duisburg
Mainz v Koln
Nurnberg v Hamburg

Sat, February 4
Hannover v Nurnberg
Hamburg v Arminia Bielefeld
Werder Bremen v Mainz
Koln v Stuttgart
Duisburg v Kaiserslautern
Schalke v Dortmund
Wolfsburg v Monchengladbach
Bayern Munich v Leverkusen
Eintracht Frankfurt v Hertha

Wed, February 8
Stuttgart v Werder Bremen
Mainz v Arminia Bielefeld
Nurnberg v Eintracht Frankfurt
Hertha v Bayern Munich
Leverkusen v Wolfsburg
Monchengladbach v Schalke
Dortmund v Duisburg
Kaiserslautern v Koln
Hannover v Hamburg

Sat, February 11
Bayern Munich v Nurnberg
Eintracht Frankfurt v Hannover
Hamburg v Mainz
Arminia Bielefeld v Stuttgart
Werder Bremen v Kaiserslautern
Koln v Dortmund
Duisburg v Monchengladbach
Schalke v Leverkusen
Wolfsburg v Hertha

Sat, February 18
Dortmund v Werder Bremen
Kaiserslautern v Arminia Bielefeld
Stuttgart v Mainz
Hannover v Bayern Munich
Nurnberg v Wolfsburg
Hertha v Schalke
Leverkusen v Duisburg
Monchengladbach v Koln
Eintracht Frankfurt v Hamburg

Sat, February 25
Schalke v Nurnberg
Wolfsburg v Hannover
Bayern Munich v Eintracht Frankfurt
Hamburg v Stuttgart
Mainz v Kaiserslautern
Arminia Bielefeld v Dortmund
Werder Bremen v Monchengladbach
Koln v Leverkusen
Duisburg v Hertha

Sat, March 4
Leverkusen v Werder Bremen
Monchengladbach v Arminia Bielefeld
Dortmund v Mainz
Kaiserslautern v Stuttgart
Eintracht Frankfurt v Wolfsburg
Hannover v Schalke
Nurnberg v Duisburg
Hertha v Koln
Bayern Munich v Hamburg

Sat, March 11
Koln v Nurnberg
Duisburg v Hannover
Schalke v Eintracht Frankfurt
Wolfsburg v Bayern Munich
Hamburg v Kaiserslautern
Stuttgart v Dortmund
Mainz v Monchengladbach
Arminia Bielefeld v Leverkusen
Werder Bremen v Hertha

Sat, March 18
Nurnberg v Werder Bremen
Hertha v Arminia Bielefeld
Leverkusen v Mainz
Monchengladbach v Stuttgart
Dortmund v Kaiserslautern
Bayern Munich v Schalke
Eintracht Frankfurt v Duisburg
Hannover v Koln
Wolfsburg v Hamburg

Sat, March 25
Arminia Bielefeld v Nurnberg
Werder Bremen v Hannover
Koln v Eintracht Frankfurt
Duisburg v Bayern Munich
Schalke v Wolfsburg
Hamburg v Dortmund
Kaiserslautern v Monchengladbach
Stuttgart v Leverkusen
Mainz v Hertha

Sat, April 1
Eintracht Frankfurt v Werder Bremen
Hannover v Arminia Bielefeld
Nurnberg v Mainz
Hertha v Stuttgart
Leverkusen v Kaiserslautern
Monchengladbach v Dortmund
Wolfsburg v Duisburg
Bayern Munich v Koln
Schalke v Hamburg

Sat, April 8
Stuttgart v Nurnberg
Mainz v Hannover
Arminia Bielefeld v Eintracht Frankfurt
Werder Bremen v Bayern Munich
Koln v Wolfsburg
Duisburg v Schalke
Hamburg v Monchengladbach
Dortmund v Leverkusen
Kaiserslautern v Hertha

Sat, April 15
Wolfsburg v Werder Bremen
Bayern Munich v Arminia Bielefeld
Eintracht Frankfurt v Mainz
Hannover v Stuttgart
Nurnberg v Kaiserslautern
Hertha v Dortmund
Leverkusen v Monchengladbach
Schalke v Koln
Duisburg v Hamburg

Sat, April 22
Dortmund v Nurnberg
Kaiserslautern v Hannover
Stuttgart v Eintracht Frankfurt
Mainz v Bayern Munich
Arminia Bielefeld v Wolfsburg
Werder Bremen v Schalke
Koln v Duisburg
Hamburg v Leverkusen
Monchengladbach v Hertha

Wed, May 3
Duisburg v Werder Bremen
Schalke v Arminia Bielefeld
Wolfsburg v Mainz
Bayern Munich v Stuttgart
Eintracht Frankfurt v Kaiserslautern
Hannover v Dortmund
Nurnberg v Monchengladbach
Hertha v Leverkusen
Koln v Hamburg

Sat, May 6
Leverkusen v Nurnberg
Monchengladbach v Hannover
Dortmund v Eintracht Frankfurt
Kaiserslautern v Bayern Munich
Stuttgart v Wolfsburg
Mainz v Schalke
Arminia Bielefeld v Duisburg
Werder Bremen v Koln
Hertha v Hamburg

Sat, May 13
Hamburg v Werder Bremen
Koln v Arminia Bielefeld
Duisburg v Mainz
Schalke v Stuttgart
Wolfsburg v Kaiserslautern
Bayern Munich v Dortmund
Eintracht Frankfurt v Monchengladbach
Hannover v Leverkusen
Nurnberg v Hertha

GREECE

Sun, August 28, 2005
Akratitos v Iraklis
Apollon v OFI
Halkidona v AEK
Kallithea v Aigaleo
Levadiakos v Ionikos
Panathinaikos v Olympiakos
Panionios v Larisa
Xanthi v PAOK

Sun, September 11
AEK v Iraklis
Apollon v Levadiakos
Aigaleo v Akratitos
Ionikos v Panathinaikos
Larisa v Kallithea
OFI v Xanthi
Olympiakos v Panionios
PAOK v Halkidona

Sun, September 18
AEK v Aigaleo
Akratitos v Larisa
Halkidona v OFI
Iraklis v PAOK
Kallithea v Olympiakos
Levadiakos v Panathinaikos
Panionios v Ionikos
Xanthi v Apollon

Sun, September 25
Apollon v Halkidona
Ionikos v Kallithea
Larisa v AEK
OFI v Iraklis
Olympiakos v Akratitos
Panathinaikos v Panionios
PAOK v Aigaleo
Xanthi v Levadiakos

Sun, October 2
AEK v Olympiakos
Akratitos v Ionikos
Halkidona v Xanthi
Aigaleo v OFI
Iraklis v Apollon
Kallithea v Panathinaikos
Levadiakos v Panionios
PAOK v Larisa

Sun, October 16
Apollon v Aigaleo
Halkidona v Levadiakos
Ionikos v AEK
OFI v Larisa
Olympiakos v PAOK
Panathinaikos v Akratitos
Panionios v Kallithea
Xanthi v Iraklis

Sun, October 23
AEK v Panathinaikos
Akratitos v Panionios
Aigaleo v Xanthi
Iraklis v Halkidona
Larisa v Apollon
Levadiakos v Kallithea
OFI v Olympiakos
PAOK v Ionikos

Sun, October 30
Apollon v Olympiakos
Halkidona v Aigaleo
Ionikos v OFI
Iraklis v Levadiakos
Kallithea v Akratitos
Panathinaikos v PAOK
Panionios v AEK
Xanthi v Larisa

Sun, November 6
AEK v Kallithea
Aigaleo v Iraklis
Ionikos v Apollon
Larisa v Halkidona
Levadiakos v Akratitos
OFI v Panathinaikos
Olympiakos v Xanthi
PAOK v Panionios

Sun, November 13
Akratitos v AEK
Halkidona v Olympiakos
Aigaleo v Levadiakos
Iraklis v Larisa
Kallithea v PAOK
Panathinaikos v Apollon
Panionios v OFI
Xanthi v Ionikos

Sun, November 20
Apollon v Panionios
Ionikos v Halkidona
Larisa v Aigaleo
Levadiakos v AEK
OFI v Kallithea
Olympiakos v Iraklis
Panathinaikos v Xanthi
PAOK v Akratitos

Sun, November 27
AEK v PAOK
Akratitos v OFI
Halkidona v Panathinaikos
Aigaleo v Olympiakos
Iraklis v Ionikos
Kallithea v Apollon
Larisa v Levadiakos
Panionios v Xanthi

Sun, December 4
Apollon v Akratitos
Ionikos v Aigaleo
Levadiakos v PAOK
OFI v AEK
Olympiakos v Larisa
Panathinaikos v Iraklis
Panionios v Halkidona
Xanthi v Kallithea

Sun, December 11
AEK v Apollon
Akratitos v Xanthi
Aigaleo v Panathinaikos
Iraklis v Panionios
Kallithea v Halkidona
Larisa v Ionikos
Olympiakos v Levadiakos
PAOK v OFI

Sun, December 18
Apollon v PAOK
Halkidona v Akratitos
Ionikos v Olympiakos
Kallithea v Iraklis
Levadiakos v OFI
Panathinaikos v Larisa
Panionios v Aigaleo
Xanthi v AEK

Sun, January 8, 2006
AEK v Halkidona
Aigaleo v Kallithea
Ionikos v Levadiakos
Iraklis v Akratitos
Larisa v Panionios
OFI v Apollon
Olympiakos v Panathinaikos
PAOK v Xanthi

Sun, January 15
Akratitos v Aigaleo
Halkidona v PAOK
Iraklis v AEK
Kallithea v Larisa
Levadiakos v Apollon
Panathinaikos v Ionikos
Panionios v Olympiakos
Xanthi v OFI

Sun, January 22
Apollon v Xanthi
Aigaleo v AEK
Ionikos v Panionios
Larisa v Akratitos
OFI v Halkidona
Olympiakos v Kallithea
Panathinaikos v Levadiakos
PAOK v Iraklis

Sun, January 29
AEK v Larisa
Akratitos v Olympiakos
Halkidona v Apollon
Aigaleo v PAOK
Iraklis v OFI
Kallithea v Ionikos
Levadiakos v Xanthi
Panionios v Panathinaikos

Sun, February 5
Apollon v Iraklis
Ionikos v Akratitos
Larisa v PAOK
OFI v Aigaleo
Olympiakos v AEK
Panathinaikos v Kallithea
Panionios v Levadiakos
Xanthi v Halkidona

Sun, February 12
AEK v Ionikos
Akratitos v Panathinaikos
Aigaleo v Apollon
Iraklis v Xanthi
Kallithea v Panionios
Larisa v OFI
Levadiakos v Halkidona
PAOK v Olympiakos

Sun, February 19
Apollon v Larisa
Halkidona v Iraklis
Ionikos v PAOK
Kallithea v Levadiakos
Olympiakos v OFI
Panathinaikos v AEK
Panionios v Akratitos
Xanthi v Aigaleo

Sun, February 26
AEK v Panionios
Akratitos v Kallithea
Aigaleo v Halkidona
Larisa v Xanthi
Levadiakos v Iraklis
OFI v Ionikos
Olympiakos v Apollon
PAOK v Panathinaikos

Sun, March 5
Akratitos v Levadiakos
Apollon v Ionikos
Halkidona v Larisa
Iraklis v Aigaleo
Kallithea v AEK
Panathinaikos v OFI
Panionios v PAOK
Xanthi v Olympiakos

Sun, March 12
AEK v Akratitos
Apollon v Panathinaikos
Ionikos v Xanthi
Larisa v Iraklis
Levadiakos v Aigaleo
OFI v Panionios
Olympiakos v Halkidona
PAOK v Kallithea

Sun, March 19
AEK v Levadiakos
Akratitos v PAOK
Halkidona v Ionikos
Aigaleo v Larisa
Iraklis v Olympiakos
Kallithea v OFI
Panionios v Apollon
Xanthi v Panathinaikos

Sun, April 2
Apollon v Kallithea
Ionikos v Iraklis
Levadiakos v Larisa
OFI v Akratitos
Olympiakos v Aigaleo
Panathinaikos v Halkidona
PAOK v AEK
Xanthi v Panionios

Sun, April 16
AEK v OFI
Akratitos v Apollon
Halkidona v Panionios
Aigaleo v Ionikos
Iraklis v Panathinaikos
Kallithea v Xanthi
Larisa v Olympiakos
PAOK v Levadiakos

Sun, May 7
Apollon v AEK
Halkidona v Kallithea
Ionikos v Larisa
Levadiakos v Olympiakos
OFI v PAOK
Panathinaikos v Aigaleo
Panionios v Iraklis
Xanthi v Akratitos

Sun, May 21
AEK v Xanthi
Akratitos v Halkidona
Aigaleo v Panionios
Iraklis v Kallithea
Larisa v Panathinaikos
OFI v Levadiakos
Olympiakos v Ionikos
PAOK v Apollon

HOLLAND

Fri, August 12, 2005
AZ v Sparta

Sat, August 13
Heracles v PSV
Roda JC v Twente
Vitesse v Heerenveen
Willem II v RKC

Sun, August 14
Feyenoord v NAC
Groningen v RBC
NEC v Utrecht
Ajax v Den Haag

Fri, August 19
Heerenveen v Roda JC

Sat, August 20
RBC v Ajax
NAC v Willem II
Twente v NEC
Den Haag v Heracles

Sun, August 21
Utrecht v AZ
Sparta v Feyenoord
PSV v Vitesse
RKC v Groningen

Fri, August 26
Den Haag v Heerenveen

Sat, August 27
Vitesse v AZ
Sparta v NAC
NEC v RKC

Sun, August 28
Roda JC v PSV
RBC v Willem II
Heracles v Groningen
Ajax v Feyenoord
Utrecht v Twente

Fri, September 9
RKC v Roda JC

Sat, September 10
AZ v RBC
Willem II v Ajax
Heerenveen v Heracles
PSV v Utrecht

Sun, September 11
NAC v Den Haag
Feyenoord v NEC
Twente v Vitesse
Groningen v Sparta

Fri, September 16
Den Haag v Twente

Sat, September 17
Heracles v RKC
NEC v NAC
RBC v Sparta

Sun, September 18
AZ v Ajax
Roda JC v Willem II
Feyenoord v Heerenveen
Groningen v PSV
Utrecht v Vitesse

Fri, September 23
Heerenveen v NEC

Sat, September 24
Willem II v Den Haag
Vitesse v Groningen
PSV v RBC
RKC v Utrecht

Sun, September 25
NAC v AZ
Sparta v Heracles
Twente v Feyenoord
Ajax v Roda JC

Fri, September 30
RBC v NAC

Sat, October 1
Den Haag v RKC
Roda JC v Vitesse

Sun, October 2
Sparta v Ajax
Heerenveen v PSV
AZ v NEC
Groningen v Willem II
Utrecht v Feyenoord
Heracles v Twente

Fri, October 14
Willem II v Sparta

Sat, October 15
NAC v Heerenveen
Twente v RKC
PSV v AZ
NEC v RBC

Sun, October 16
Vitesse v Den Haag
Roda JC v Utrecht
Feyenoord v Groningen
Ajax v Heracles

Fri, October 21
Heracles v NEC

Sat, October 22
Sparta v Roda JC
NAC v Twente
RBC v Vitesse

Sun, October 23
PSV v Ajax
RKC v Feyenoord
Groningen v Den Haag
AZ v Willem II
Heerenveen v Utrecht

Fri, October 28
Ajax v Heerenveen

Sat, October 29
Vitesse v Heracles
RKC v NAC
Den Haag v AZ
Twente v PSV

Sun, October 30
Groningen v Roda JC
Utrecht v RBC
NEC v Sparta
Willem II v Feyenoord

Fri, November 4
RBC v RKC

Sat, November 5
Roda JC v NAC
PSV v Sparta

Sun, November 6
AZ v Heracles
Heerenveen v Groningen
NEC v Ajax
Feyenoord v Vitesse
Utrecht v Den Haag
Twente v Willem II

Fri, November 18
Willem II v Vitesse

Sat, November 19
RKC v PSV
NAC v Utrecht
Den Haag v NEC

Sun, November 20
Groningen v AZ
Ajax v Twente
Heracles v RBC
Roda JC v Feyenoord
Sparta v Heerenveen

Fri, November 25
NAC v Groningen

Sat, November 26
Vitesse v RKC
Twente v Sparta

Sun, November 27
NEC v Willem II
Feyenoord v Heracles
Utrecht v Ajax
PSV v Den Haag
Heerenveen v RBC
AZ v Roda JC

Fri, December 2
Heracles v Roda JC

Sat, December 3
AZ v Heerenveen
PSV v NAC
Willem II v Utrecht

Sun, December 4
Groningen v Twente
RBC v Feyenoord
Sparta v Den Haag
NEC v Vitesse
Ajax v RKC

Fri, December 9
Roda JC v NEC

Sat, December 10
Twente v AZ
Den Haag v RBC
NAC v Heracles
Heerenveen v Willem II

Sun, December 11
Vitesse v Ajax
RKC v Sparta
Feyenoord v PSV
Utrecht v Groningen

Fri, December 16
Sparta v Vitesse

Sat, December 17
RBC v Roda JC
PSV v Willem II
Heerenveen v Twente
AZ v RKC

Sun, December 18
Den Haag v Feyenoord
NAC v Ajax
Heracles v Utrecht
Groningen v NEC

Mon, December 26
Twente v RBC
Utrecht v Sparta
Feyenoord v AZ
NEC v PSV
Willem II v Heracles

Tue, December 27
Roda JC v Den Haag
Ajax v Groningen
Vitesse v NAC
RKC v Heerenveen

Thu, December 29
PSV v Twente
RBC v Utrecht
Feyenoord v Willem II

Fri, December 30
AZ v Den Haag
Sparta v NEC
Heracles v Vitesse
NAC v RKC
Roda JC v Groningen
Heerenveen v Ajax

Fri, January 13, 2006
Groningen v Heerenveen

Sat, January 14
RKC v RBC
NAC v Roda JC
Heracles v AZ

Sun, January 15
Vitesse v Feyenoord
Sparta v PSV
Den Haag v Utrecht
Ajax v NEC
Willem II v Twente

Fri, January 20
PSV v RKC

Sat, January 21
Heerenveen v Sparta
AZ v Groningen
RBC v Heracles
Vitesse v Willem II

Sun, January 22
NEC v Den Haag
Twente v Ajax
Feyenoord v Roda JC
Utrecht v NAC

Fri, January 27
Roda JC v AZ

Sat, January 28
Willem II v NEC
Sparta v Twente
RBC v Heerenveen

Sun, January 29
Den Haag v PSV
RKC v Vitesse
Heracles v Feyenoord
Ajax v Utrecht
Groningen v NAC

Fri, February 3
Groningen v Heracles

Sat, February 4
NAC v Sparta
AZ v Vitesse
Willem II v RBC
PSV v Roda JC

Sun, February 5
Twente v Utrecht
Feyenoord v Ajax
Heerenveen v Den Haag
RKC v NEC

Tue, February 7
RBC v AZ
Sparta v Groningen

Wed, February 8
Den Haag v NAC
Heracles v Heerenveen
Roda JC v RKC
Utrecht v PSV
Vitesse v Twente

Ajax v Willem II
NEC v Feyenoord

Fri, February 10
Sparta v AZ

Sat, February 11
Twente v Roda JC
RKC v Willem II
PSV v Heracles
Heerenveen v Vitesse

Sun, February 12
Den Haag v Ajax
RBC v Groningen
NAC v Feyenoord
Utrecht v NEC

Fri, February 17
NEC v Twente

Sat, February 18
Groningen v RKC
Roda JC v Heerenveen
Vitesse v PSV

Sun, February 19
AZ v Utrecht
Heracles v Den Haag
Willem II v NAC
Ajax v RBC
Feyenoord v Sparta

Fri, February 24
RBC v NEC
RKC v Twente

Sat, February 25
Sparta v Willem II
Heerenveen v NAC
Den Haag v Vitesse

Sun, February 26
Heracles v Ajax
Utrecht v Roda JC
Groningen v Feyenoord
AZ v PSV

Fri, March 3
NEC v AZ

Sat, March 4
PSV v Heerenveen
NAC v RBC
Willem II v Groningen
Vitesse v Roda JC

Sun, March 5
Twente v Heracles
Feyenoord v Utrecht
Ajax v Sparta
RKC v Den Haag

Fri, March 10
Utrecht v Heerenveen

Sat, March 11
Roda JC v Sparta
NEC v Heracles
Den Haag v Groningen
Twente v NAC

Sun, March 12
Willem II v AZ
Feyenoord v RKC
Vitesse v RBC
Ajax v PSV

Fri, March 17
NAC v Vitesse

Sat, March 18
Heracles v Willem II
PSV v NEC
Heerenveen v RKC
Den Haag v Roda JC

Sun, March 19
Groningen v Ajax
AZ v Feyenoord
Sparta v Utrecht
RBC v Twente

Fri, March 24
Vitesse v Sparta

Sat, March 25
Willem II v PSV
Twente v Heerenveen
Roda JC v RBC
NEC v Groningen

Sun, March 26
Utrecht v Heracles
Feyenoord v Den Haag
RKC v AZ
Ajax v NAC

Fri, March 31
AZ v NAC

Sat, April 1
RBC v PSV
NEC v Heerenveen
Den Haag v Willem II
Heracles v Sparta

Sun, April 2
Utrecht v RKC
Feyenoord v Twente
Roda JC v Ajax
Groningen v Vitesse

Fri, April 7
Heerenveen v Feyenoord

Sat, April 8
PSV v Groningen
RKC v Heracles
NAC v NEC
Sparta v RBC

Sun, April 9
Vitesse v Utrecht
Twente v Den Haag
Willem II v Roda JC
Ajax v AZ

Wed, April 12
Willem II v Heerenveen
Ajax v Vitesse
RBC v Den Haag
Sparta v RKC
AZ v Twente
Groningen v Utrecht
PSV v Feyenoord
Heracles v NAC
NEC v Roda JC

Sun, April 16
RKC v Ajax
NAC v PSV
Roda JC v Heracles
Twente v Groningen
Utrecht v Willem II
Vitesse v NEC
Feyenoord v RBC
Den Haag v Sparta
Heerenveen v AZ

PORTUGAL

Sun, August 21, 2005
Academica v Benfica
Boavista v Setubal
Pacos Ferreira v Nacional
Gil Vicente v Maritimo
Guimaraes v Naval
Uniao Leiria v Sporting Braga
Penafiel v Rio Ave
Porto v Estrela Amadora
Sporting Lisbon v Belenenses

Sun, August 28
Estrela Amadora v Boavista
Belenenses v Uniao Leiria
Benfica v Gil Vicente
Sporting Braga v Penafiel
Maritimo v Sporting Lisbon
Nacional v Academica
Naval v Porto
Rio Ave v Guimaraes
Setubal v Pacos Ferreira

Sun, September 11
Academica v Setubal
Estrela Amadora v Naval
Boavista v Pacos Ferreira
Gil Vicente v Nacional
Guimaraes v Sporting Braga
Uniao Leiria v Maritimo
Penafiel v Belenenses
Porto v Rio Ave
Sporting Lisbon v Benfica

Sun, September 18
Belenenses v Guimaraes
Benfica v Uniao Leiria
Sporting Braga v Porto
Pacos Ferreira v Academica
Maritimo v Penafiel
Nacional v Sporting Lisbon
Naval v Boavista
Rio Ave v Estrela Amadora
Setubal v Gil Vicente

Sun, September 25
Estrela Amadora v Sporting Braga
Boavista v Academica
Gil Vicente v Pacos Ferreira
Guimaraes v Maritimo
Uniao Leiria v Nacional
Naval v Rio Ave
Penafiel v Benfica
Porto v Belenenses
Sporting Lisbon v Setubal

Sun, October 2
Academica v Gil Vicente
Belenenses v Estrela Amadora
Benfica v Guimaraes
Sporting Braga v Naval
Pacos Ferreira v Sporting Lisbon
Maritimo v Porto
Nacional v Penafiel
Rio Ave v Boavista
Setubal v Uniao Leiria

Sun, October 16
Estrela Amadora v Maritimo
Boavista v Gil Vicente
Guimaraes v Nacional
Uniao Leiria v Pacos Ferreira
Naval v Belenenses
Penafiel v Setubal
Porto v Benfica
Rio Ave v Sporting Braga
Sporting Lisbon v Academica

Sun, October 23
Academica v Uniao Leiria
Belenenses v Rio Ave
Benfica v Estrela Amadora
Sporting Braga v Boavista
Pacos Ferreira v Penafiel
Gil Vicente v Sporting Lisbon
Maritimo v Naval
Nacional v Porto
Setubal v Guimaraes

Sun, October 30
Estrela Amadora v Nacional
Boavista v Sporting Lisbon
Sporting Braga v Belenenses
Guimaraes v Pacos Ferreira
Uniao Leiria v Gil Vicente
Naval v Benfica
Penafiel v Academica
Porto v Setubal
Rio Ave v Maritimo

Sun, November 6
Academica v Guimaraes
Belenenses v Boavista
Benfica v Rio Ave
Pacos Ferreira v Porto
Gil Vicente v Penafiel
Maritimo v Sporting Braga
Nacional v Naval
Setubal v Estrela Amadora
Sporting Lisbon v Uniao Leiria

Sun, November 20
Estrela Amadora v Pacos Ferreira
Belenenses v Maritimo
Boavista v Uniao Leiria
Sporting Braga v Benfica
Guimaraes v Gil Vicente
Naval v Setubal
Penafiel v Sporting Lisbon
Porto v Academica
Rio Ave v Nacional

Sun, November 27
Academica v Estrela Amadora
Benfica v Belenenses
Pacos Ferreira v Naval
Gil Vicente v Porto
Uniao Leiria v Penafiel
Maritimo v Boavista
Nacional v Sporting Braga
Setubal v Rio Ave
Sporting Lisbon v Guimaraes

Sun, December 4
Estrela Amadora v Gil Vicente
Belenenses v Nacional
Boavista v Penafiel
Sporting Braga v Setubal
Guimaraes v Uniao Leiria
Maritimo v Benfica
Naval v Academica
Porto v Sporting Lisbon
Rio Ave v Pacos Ferreira

Sun, December 11
Academica v Rio Ave
Benfica v Boavista
Pacos Ferreira v Sporting Braga
Gil Vicente v Naval
Uniao Leiria v Porto
Nacional v Maritimo
Penafiel v Guimaraes
Setubal v Belenenses
Sporting Lisbon v Estrela Amadora

Sun, December 18
Estrela Amadora v Uniao Leiria
Belenenses v Pacos Ferreira
Benfica v Nacional
Boavista v Guimaraes
Sporting Braga v Academica
Maritimo v Setubal
Naval v Sporting Lisbon
Porto v Penafiel
Rio Ave v Gil Vicente

Wed, December 21
Academica v Belenenses
Boavista v Nacional
Pacos Ferreira v Maritimo
Gil Vicente v Sporting Braga
Guimaraes v Porto
Uniao Leiria v Naval
Penafiel v Estrela Amadora
Setubal v Benfica
Sporting Lisbon v Rio Ave

Sun, January 8, 2006
Estrela Amadora v Guimaraes
Belenenses v Gil Vicente
Benfica v Pacos Ferreira
Sporting Braga v Sporting Lisbon
Maritimo v Academica
Nacional v Setubal
Naval v Penafiel
Porto v Boavista
Rio Ave v Uniao Leiria

Sun, January 15
Estrela Amadora v Porto
Belenenses v Sporting Lisbon
Benfica v Academica
Sporting Braga v Uniao Leiria
Maritimo v Gil Vicente
Nacional v Pacos Ferreira
Naval v Guimaraes
Rio Ave v Penafiel
Setubal v Boavista

Sun, January 22
Academica v Nacional
Boavista v Estrela Amadora
Pacos Ferreira v Setubal
Gil Vicente v Benfica
Guimaraes v Rio Ave
Uniao Leiria v Belenenses
Penafiel v Sporting Braga
Porto v Naval
Sporting Lisbon v Maritimo

Sun, January 29
Belenenses v Penafiel
Benfica v Sporting Lisbon
Sporting Braga v Guimaraes
Pacos Ferreira v Boavista
Maritimo v Uniao Leiria
Nacional v Gil Vicente
Naval v Estrela Amadora
Rio Ave v Porto
Setubal v Academica

Sun, February 5
Academica v Pacos Ferreira
Estrela Amadora v Rio Ave
Boavista v Naval
Gil Vicente v Setubal
Guimaraes v Belenenses
Uniao Leiria v Benfica
Penafiel v Maritimo
Porto v Sporting Braga
Sporting Lisbon v Nacional

Sun, February 12
Academica v Boavista
Belenenses v Porto
Benfica v Penafiel
Sporting Braga v Estrela Amadora
Pacos Ferreira v Gil Vicente
Maritimo v Guimaraes
Nacional v Uniao Leiria
Rio Ave v Naval
Setubal v Sporting Lisbon

Sun, February 19
Estrela Amadora v Belenenses
Boavista v Rio Ave
Gil Vicente v Academica
Guimaraes v Benfica
Uniao Leiria v Setubal
Naval v Sporting Braga
Penafiel v Nacional
Porto v Maritimo
Sporting Lisbon v Pacos Ferreira

Sun, February 26
Academica v Sporting Lisbon
Belenenses v Naval
Benfica v Porto
Sporting Braga v Rio Ave
Pacos Ferreira v Uniao Leiria
Gil Vicente v Boavista
Maritimo v Estrela Amadora
Nacional v Guimaraes
Setubal v Penafiel

Sun, March 5
Estrela Amadora v Benfica
Boavista v Sporting Braga
Guimaraes v Setubal
Uniao Leiria v Academica
Naval v Maritimo
Penafiel v Pacos Ferreira
Porto v Nacional
Rio Ave v Belenenses
Sporting Lisbon v Gil Vicente

Sun, March 12
Academica v Penafiel
Belenenses v Sporting Braga
Benfica v Naval
Pacos Ferreira v Guimaraes
Gil Vicente v Uniao Leiria
Maritimo v Rio Ave
Nacional v Estrela Amadora
Setubal v Porto
Sporting Lisbon v Boavista

Sun, March 19
Estrela Amadora v Setubal
Boavista v Belenenses
Sporting Braga v Maritimo
Guimaraes v Academica
Uniao Leiria v Sporting Lisbon
Naval v Nacional
Penafiel v Gil Vicente
Porto v Pacos Ferreira
Rio Ave v Benfica

Sun, March 26
Academica v Porto
Benfica v Sporting Braga
Pacos Ferreira v Estrela Amadora
Gil Vicente v Guimaraes
Uniao Leiria v Boavista
Maritimo v Belenenses
Nacional v Rio Ave
Setubal v Naval
Sporting Lisbon v Penafiel

Sun, April 2
Estrela Amadora v Academica
Belenenses v Benfica
Boavista v Maritimo
Sporting Braga v Nacional
Guimaraes v Sporting Lisbon
Naval v Pacos Ferreira
Penafiel v Uniao Leiria
Porto v Gil Vicente
Rio Ave v Setubal

Sun, April 9
Academica v Naval
Benfica v Maritimo
Pacos Ferreira v Rio Ave
Gil Vicente v Estrela Amadora
Uniao Leiria v Guimaraes
Nacional v Belenenses
Penafiel v Boavista
Setubal v Sporting Braga
Sporting Lisbon v Porto

Sat, April 15
Estrela Amadora v Sporting Lisbon
Belenenses v Setubal
Boavista v Benfica
Sporting Braga v Pacos Ferreira
Guimaraes v Penafiel
Maritimo v Nacional
Naval v Gil Vicente
Porto v Uniao Leiria
Rio Ave v Academica

Sun, April 23
Academica v Sporting Braga
Pacos Ferreira v Belenenses
Gil Vicente v Rio Ave
Guimaraes v Boavista
Uniao Leiria v Estrela Amadora
Nacional v Benfica
Penafiel v Porto
Setubal v Maritimo
Sporting Lisbon v Naval

Sun, April 30
Estrela Amadora v Penafiel
Belenenses v Academica
Benfica v Setubal
Sporting Braga v Gil Vicente
Maritimo v Pacos Ferreira
Nacional v Boavista
Naval v Uniao Leiria
Porto v Guimaraes
Rio Ave v Sporting Lisbon

Sun, May 7
Academica v Maritimo
Boavista v Porto
Pacos Ferreira v Benfica
Gil Vicente v Belenenses
Guimaraes v Estrela Amadora
Uniao Leiria v Rio Ave
Penafiel v Naval
Setubal v Nacional
Sporting Lisbon v Sporting Braga

SPAIN

Sun, August 28, 2005
Athletic Bilbao v Real Sociedad
Atletico Madrid v Zaragoza
Celta Vigo v Malaga
Espanyol v Getafe
Sevilla v Racing Santander
Valencia v Betis
Alaves v Barcelona
Mallorca v Deportivo La Coruna
Osasuna v Villarreal
Cadiz v Real Madrid

Sun, September 11
Barcelona v Mallorca
Betis v Osasuna
Deportivo La Coruna v Atletico Madrid
Racing Santander v Cadiz
Real Madrid v Celta Vigo
Real Sociedad v Alaves
Zaragoza v Valencia
Getafe v Athletic Bilbao
Villarreal v Sevilla
Malaga v Espanyol

Sun, September 18
Athletic Bilbao v Malaga
Atletico Madrid v Barcelona
Betis v Zaragoza

Celta Vigo v Racing Santander
Espanyol v Real Madrid
Valencia v Deportivo La Coruna
Alaves v Getafe
Mallorca v Real Sociedad
Osasuna v Sevilla
Cadiz v Villarreal

Wed, September 21
Barcelona v Valencia
Deportivo La Coruna v Betis
Racing Santander v Espanyol
Real Madrid v Athletic Bilbao
Real Sociedad v Atletico Madrid
Sevilla v Cadiz
Zaragoza v Osasuna
Getafe v Mallorca
Villarreal v Celta Vigo
Malaga v Alaves

Sun, September 25
Athletic Bilbao v Racing Santander
Atletico Madrid v Getafe
Betis v Barcelona
Celta Vigo v Sevilla
Espanyol v Villarreal
Valencia v Real Sociedad
Zaragoza v Deportivo La Coruna
Alaves v Real Madrid
Mallorca v Malaga
Osasuna v Cadiz

Sun, October 2
Barcelona v Zaragoza
Deportivo La Coruna v Osasuna
Racing Santander v Alaves
Real Madrid v Mallorca
Real Sociedad v Betis
Sevilla v Espanyol
Getafe v Valencia
Villarreal v Athletic Bilbao
Cadiz v Celta Vigo
Malaga v Atletico Madrid

Sun, October 16
Athletic Bilbao v Sevilla
Atletico Madrid v Real Madrid
Betis v Getafe
Deportivo La Coruna v Barcelona
Espanyol v Cadiz
Valencia v Malaga
Zaragoza v Real Sociedad
Alaves v Villarreal
Mallorca v Racing Santander
Osasuna v Celta Vigo

Sun, October 23
Barcelona v Osasuna
Celta Vigo v Espanyol
Racing Santander v Atletico Madrid
Real Madrid v Valencia
Real Sociedad v Deportivo La Coruna
Sevilla v Alaves
Getafe v Zaragoza
Villarreal v Mallorca
Cadiz v Athletic Bilbao
Malaga v Betis

Sun, October 30
Athletic Bilbao v Celta Vigo
Atletico Madrid v Villarreal
Barcelona v Real Sociedad
Betis v Real Madrid
Deportivo La Coruna v Getafe
Valencia v Racing Santander
Zaragoza v Malaga
Alaves v Cadiz
Mallorca v Sevilla
Osasuna v Espanyol

Sun, November 6
Celta Vigo v Alaves
Espanyol v Athletic Bilbao
Racing Santander v Betis
Real Madrid v Zaragoza
Real Sociedad v Osasuna
Sevilla v Atletico Madrid
Getafe v Barcelona
Villarreal v Valencia
Cadiz v Mallorca
Malaga v Deportivo La Coruna

Wed, November 9
Atletico Madrid v Cadiz
Barcelona v Malaga
Betis v Villarreal
Deportivo La Coruna v Real Madrid
Real Sociedad v Getafe
Valencia v Sevilla
Zaragoza v Racing Santander
Alaves v Espanyol
Mallorca v Celta Vigo
Osasuna v Athletic Bilbao

Sun, November 20
Athletic Bilbao v Alaves
Celta Vigo v Atletico Madrid
Espanyol v Mallorca
Racing Santander v Deportivo La Coruna
Real Madrid v Barcelona
Sevilla v Betis
Getafe v Osasuna
Villarreal v Zaragoza
Cadiz v Valencia
Malaga v Real Sociedad

Sun, November 27
Atletico Madrid v Espanyol
Barcelona v Racing Santander
Betis v Cadiz
Deportivo La Coruna v Villarreal
Real Sociedad v Real Madrid
Valencia v Celta Vigo
Zaragoza v Sevilla
Getafe v Malaga
Mallorca v Athletic Bilbao
Osasuna v Alaves

Sun, December 4
Athletic Bilbao v Atletico Madrid
Celta Vigo v Betis
Espanyol v Valencia
Racing Santander v Real Sociedad
Real Madrid v Getafe
Sevilla v Deportivo La Coruna
Alaves v Mallorca
Villarreal v Barcelona
Cadiz v Zaragoza
Malaga v Osasuna

Sun, December 11
Atletico Madrid v Alaves
Barcelona v Sevilla
Betis v Espanyol
Deportivo La Coruna v Cadiz
Real Sociedad v Villarreal
Valencia v Athletic Bilbao
Zaragoza v Celta Vigo
Getafe v Racing Santander
Osasuna v Mallorca
Malaga v Real Madrid

Sun, December 18
Athletic Bilbao v Betis
Celta Vigo v Deportivo La Coruna
Espanyol v Zaragoza
Racing Santander v Malaga
Real Madrid v Osasuna
Sevilla v Real Sociedad
Alaves v Valencia
Mallorca v Atletico Madrid
Villarreal v Getafe
Cadiz v Barcelona

Wed, December 21
Barcelona v Celta Vigo
Betis v Alaves
Deportivo La Coruna v Espanyol
Real Madrid v Racing Santander
Real Sociedad v Cadiz
Valencia v Mallorca
Zaragoza v Athletic Bilbao
Getafe v Sevilla
Osasuna v Atletico Madrid
Malaga v Villarreal

Sun, January 8, 2006
Athletic Bilbao v Deportivo La Coruna
Atletico Madrid v Valencia
Celta Vigo v Real Sociedad
Espanyol v Barcelona
Sevilla v Malaga
Alaves v Zaragoza
Mallorca v Betis
Osasuna v Racing Santander
Villarreal v Real Madrid
Cadiz v Getafe

Sun, January 15
Barcelona v Athletic Bilbao
Betis v Atletico Madrid
Deportivo La Coruna v Alaves
Racing Santander v Villarreal
Real Madrid v Sevilla
Real Sociedad v Espanyol
Valencia v Osasuna
Zaragoza v Mallorca
Getafe v Celta Vigo
Malaga v Cadiz

Sun, January 22
Barcelona v Alaves
Betis v Valencia
Deportivo La Coruna v Mallorca
Racing Santander v Sevilla
Real Madrid v Cadiz
Real Sociedad v Athletic Bilbao
Zaragoza v Atletico Madrid
Getafe v Espanyol
Villarreal v Osasuna
Malaga v Celta Vigo

Sun, January 29
Athletic Bilbao v Getafe
Atletico Madrid v Deportivo La Coruna
Celta Vigo v Real Madrid
Espanyol v Malaga
Sevilla v Villarreal
Valencia v Zaragoza
Alaves v Real Sociedad
Mallorca v Barcelona
Osasuna v Betis
Cadiz v Racing Santander

Sun, February 5
Barcelona v Atletico Madrid
Deportivo La Coruna v Valencia
Racing Santander v Celta Vigo
Real Madrid v Espanyol
Real Sociedad v Mallorca
Sevilla v Osasuna
Zaragoza v Betis
Getafe v Alaves
Villarreal v Cadiz
Malaga v Athletic Bilbao

Sun, February 12
Athletic Bilbao v Real Madrid
Atletico Madrid v Real Sociedad
Betis v Deportivo La Coruna
Celta Vigo v Villarreal
Espanyol v Racing Santander
Valencia v Barcelona
Alaves v Malaga
Mallorca v Getafe
Osasuna v Zaragoza
Cadiz v Sevilla

Sun, February 19
Barcelona v Betis
Deportivo La Coruna v Zaragoza
Racing Santander v Athletic Bilbao
Real Madrid v Alaves
Real Sociedad v Valencia
Sevilla v Celta Vigo
Getafe v Atletico Madrid
Villarreal v Espanyol
Cadiz v Osasuna
Malaga v Mallorca

Sun, February 26
Athletic Bilbao v Villarreal
Atletico Madrid v Malaga
Betis v Real Sociedad
Celta Vigo v Cadiz
Espanyol v Sevilla
Valencia v Getafe
Zaragoza v Barcelona
Alaves v Racing Santander
Mallorca v Real Madrid
Osasuna v Deportivo La Coruna

Sun, March 5
Barcelona v Deportivo La Coruna
Celta Vigo v Osasuna
Racing Santander v Mallorca
Real Madrid v Atletico Madrid
Real Sociedad v Zaragoza
Sevilla v Athletic Bilbao
Getafe v Betis
Villarreal v Alaves
Cadiz v Espanyol
Malaga v Valencia

Sun, March 12
Athletic Bilbao v Cadiz
Atletico Madrid v Racing Santander
Betis v Malaga
Deportivo La Coruna v Real Sociedad
Espanyol v Celta Vigo
Valencia v Real Madrid
Zaragoza v Getafe
Alaves v Sevilla
Mallorca v Villarreal
Osasuna v Barcelona

Sun, March 19
Celta Vigo v Athletic Bilbao
Espanyol v Osasuna
Racing Santander v Valencia
Real Madrid v Betis
Real Sociedad v Barcelona
Sevilla v Mallorca
Getafe v Deportivo La Coruna
Villarreal v Atletico Madrid
Cadiz v Alaves
Malaga v Zaragoza

Wed, March 22
Athletic Bilbao v Espanyol
Atletico Madrid v Sevilla
Barcelona v Getafe
Betis v Racing Santander
Deportivo La Coruna v Malaga
Valencia v Villarreal
Zaragoza v Real Madrid
Alaves v Celta Vigo
Mallorca v Cadiz
Osasuna v Real Sociedad

Sun, March 26
Athletic Bilbao v Osasuna
Celta Vigo v Mallorca
Espanyol v Alaves
Racing Santander v Zaragoza
Real Madrid v Deportivo La Coruna
Sevilla v Valencia
Getafe v Real Sociedad
Villarreal v Betis
Cadiz v Atletico Madrid
Malaga v Barcelona

Sun, April 2
Atletico Madrid v Celta Vigo
Barcelona v Real Madrid
Betis v Sevilla
Deportivo La Coruna v Racing Santander
Real Sociedad v Malaga
Valencia v Cadiz
Zaragoza v Villarreal
Alaves v Athletic Bilbao
Mallorca v Espanyol
Osasuna v Getafe

Sun, April 9
Athletic Bilbao v Mallorca
Celta Vigo v Valencia
Espanyol v Atletico Madrid
Racing Santander v Barcelona
Real Madrid v Real Sociedad
Sevilla v Zaragoza
Alaves v Osasuna
Villarreal v Deportivo La Coruna
Cadiz v Betis
Malaga v Getafe

Sun, April 16
Atletico Madrid v Athletic Bilbao
Barcelona v Villarreal
Betis v Celta Vigo
Deportivo La Coruna v Sevilla
Real Sociedad v Racing Santander
Valencia v Espanyol
Zaragoza v Cadiz
Getafe v Real Madrid
Mallorca v Alaves
Osasuna v Malaga

Sun, April 23
Athletic Bilbao v Valencia
Celta Vigo v Zaragoza
Espanyol v Betis
Racing Santander v Getafe
Real Madrid v Malaga
Sevilla v Barcelona
Alaves v Atletico Madrid
Mallorca v Osasuna
Villarreal v Real Sociedad
Cadiz v Deportivo La Coruna

Sun, April 30
Atletico Madrid v Mallorca
Barcelona v Cadiz
Betis v Athletic Bilbao
Deportivo La Coruna v Celta Vigo
Real Sociedad v Sevilla
Valencia v Alaves
Zaragoza v Espanyol
Getafe v Villarreal
Osasuna v Real Madrid
Malaga v Racing Santander

Wed, May 3
Athletic Bilbao v Zaragoza
Atletico Madrid v Osasuna
Celta Vigo v Barcelona
Espanyol v Deportivo La Coruna
Racing Santander v Real Madrid
Sevilla v Getafe
Alaves v Betis
Mallorca v Valencia
Villarreal v Malaga
Cadiz v Real Sociedad

Sun, May 7
Barcelona v Espanyol
Betis v Mallorca
Deportivo La Coruna v Athletic Bilbao
Racing Santander v Osasuna
Real Madrid v Villarreal
Real Sociedad v Celta Vigo
Valencia v Atletico Madrid
Zaragoza v Alaves
Getafe v Cadiz
Malaga v Sevilla

Sun, May 14
Athletic Bilbao v Barcelona
Atletico Madrid v Betis
Celta Vigo v Getafe
Espanyol v Real Sociedad
Sevilla v Real Madrid
Alaves v Deportivo La Coruna
Mallorca v Zaragoza
Osasuna v Valencia
Villarreal v Racing Santander
Cadiz v Malaga

TURKEY

Fri, August 5, 2005
Genclerbirligi v Fenerbahce

Sat, August 6
Diyarbakirspor v Rizespor
Erciyesspor v Besiktas
Sivasspor v Malatyaspor
Trabzonspor v Kayserispor

Sun, August 7
Denizlispor v Ankaraspor
Galatasaray v Konyaspor
Samsunspor v Gaziantepspor
Manisaspor v Ankaragucu

Fri, August 12
Ankaragucu v Galatasaray

Sat, August 13
Fenerbahce v Diyarbakirspor
Gaziantepspor v Sivasspor
Malatyaspor v Manisaspor
Rizespor v Samsunspor

Sun, August 14
Ankaraspor v Genclerbirligi
Besiktas v Denizlispor
Kayserispor v Erciyesspor
Konyaspor v Trabzonspor

Sat, August 20
Denizlispor v Kayserispor
Genclerbirligi v Besiktas
Samsunspor v Sivasspor
Trabzonspor v Ankaragucu

Sun, August 21
Diyarbakirspor v Ankaraspor
Erciyesspor v Konyaspor
Galatasaray v Malatyaspor
Rizespor v Fenerbahce
Manisaspor v Gaziantepspor

Fri, August 26
Gaziantepspor v Galatasaray

Sat, August 27
Ankaraspor v Rizespor
Fenerbahce v Samsunspor
Konyaspor v Denizlispor
Sivasspor v Manisaspor

Sun, August 28
Ankaragucu v Erciyesspor
Besiktas v Diyarbakirspor
Kayserispor v Genclerbirligi
Malatyaspor v Trabzonspor

Sun, September 11
Denizlispor v Ankaragucu
Diyarbakirspor v Kayserispor
Erciyesspor v Malatyaspor
Fenerbahce v Ankaraspor
Galatasaray v Sivasspor
Genclerbirligi v Konyaspor
Rizespor v Besiktas
Samsunspor v Manisaspor
Trabzonspor v Gaziantepspor

Sun, September 18
Ankaragucu v Genclerbirligi
Ankaraspor v Samsunspor
Besiktas v Fenerbahce
Gaziantepspor v Erciyesspor
Kayserispor v Rizespor
Konyaspor v Diyarbakirspor
Malatyaspor v Denizlispor
Sivasspor v Trabzonspor
Manisaspor v Galatasaray

Sun, September 25
Ankaraspor v Besiktas
Denizlispor v Gaziantepspor
Diyarbakirspor v Ankaragucu
Erciyesspor v Sivasspor
Fenerbahce v Kayserispor
Genclerbirligi v Malatyaspor
Rizespor v Konyaspor
Samsunspor v Galatasaray
Trabzonspor v Manisaspor

Sun, October 2
Ankaragucu v Rizespor
Besiktas v Samsunspor
Galatasaray v Trabzonspor
Gaziantepspor v Genclerbirligi
Kayserispor v Ankaraspor
Konyaspor v Fenerbahce
Malatyaspor v Diyarbakirspor
Sivasspor v Denizlispor
Manisaspor v Erciyesspor

Sun, October 16
Ankaraspor v Konyaspor
Besiktas v Kayserispor
Denizlispor v Manisaspor
Diyarbakirspor v Gaziantepspor
Erciyesspor v Galatasaray
Fenerbahce v Ankaragucu
Genclerbirligi v Sivasspor
Rizespor v Malatyaspor
Samsunspor v Trabzonspor

Sun, October 23
Ankaragucu v Ankaraspor
Galatasaray v Denizlispor
Gaziantepspor v Rizespor
Kayserispor v Samsunspor
Konyaspor v Besiktas
Malatyaspor v Fenerbahce
Sivasspor v Diyarbakirspor

Trabzonspor v Erciyesspor
Manisaspor v Genclerbirligi

Sun, October 30
Ankaraspor v Malatyaspor
Besiktas v Ankaragucu
Denizlispor v Trabzonspor
Diyarbakirspor v Manisaspor
Fenerbahce v Gaziantepspor
Genclerbirligi v Galatasaray
Kayserispor v Konyaspor
Rizespor v Sivasspor
Samsunspor v Erciyesspor

Sun, November 6
Ankaragucu v Kayserispor
Erciyesspor v Denizlispor
Galatasaray v Diyarbakirspor
Malatyaspor v Besiktas
Sivasspor v Fenerbahce
Trabzonspor v Genclerbirligi
Manisaspor v Rizespor
Gaziantepspor v Ankaraspor
Konyaspor v Samsunspor

Sun, November 20
Ankaraspor v Sivasspor
Besiktas v Gaziantepspor
Diyarbakirspor v Trabzonspor
Fenerbahce v Manisaspor
Genclerbirligi v Erciyesspor
Kayserispor v Malatyaspor
Konyaspor v Ankaragucu
Rizespor v Galatasaray
Samsunspor v Denizlispor

Sun, November 27
Ankaragucu v Samsunspor
Denizlispor v Genclerbirligi
Erciyesspor v Diyarbakirspor
Galatasaray v Fenerbahce
Gaziantepspor v Kayserispor
Malatyaspor v Konyaspor
Sivasspor v Besiktas
Trabzonspor v Rizespor
Manisaspor v Ankaraspor

Sun, December 4
Ankaraspor v Galatasaray
Besiktas v Manisaspor
Diyarbakirspor v Denizlispor
Fenerbahce v Trabzonspor
Genclerbirligi v Samsunspor
Kayserispor v Sivasspor
Konyaspor v Gaziantepspor
Malatyaspor v Ankaragucu
Rizespor v Erciyesspor

Sun, December 11
Denizlispor v Rizespor
Erciyesspor v Fenerbahce
Galatasaray v Besiktas
Gaziantepspor v Ankaragucu
Genclerbirligi v Diyarbakirspor
Samsunspor v Malatyaspor
Sivasspor v Konyaspor
Trabzonspor v Ankaraspor
Manisaspor v Kayserispor

Sun, December 18
Ankaragucu v Sivasspor
Ankaraspor v Erciyesspor
Besiktas v Trabzonspor
Diyarbakirspor v Samsunspor
Fenerbahce v Denizlispor
Kayserispor v Galatasaray
Konyaspor v Manisaspor
Malatyaspor v Gaziantepspor
Rizespor v Genclerbirligi

Sun, January 22, 2006
Ankaragucu v Manisaspor
Ankaraspor v Denizlispor
Besiktas v Erciyesspor
Fenerbahce v Genclerbirligi
Gaziantepspor v Samsunspor
Kayserispor v Trabzonspor
Konyaspor v Galatasaray
Malatyaspor v Sivasspor
Rizespor v Diyarbakirspor

Sun, January 29
Denizlispor v Besiktas
Diyarbakirspor v Fenerbahce
Erciyesspor v Kayserispor
Galatasaray v Ankaragucu
Genclerbirligi v Ankaraspor
Samsunspor v Rizespor
Sivasspor v Gaziantepspor
Trabzonspor v Konyaspor
Manisaspor v Malatyaspor

Sun, February 5
Ankaragucu v Trabzonspor
Ankaraspor v Diyarbakirspor
Besiktas v Genclerbirligi
Fenerbahce v Rizespor
Gaziantepspor v Manisaspor
Kayserispor v Denizlispor
Konyaspor v Erciyesspor
Malatyaspor v Galatasaray
Sivasspor v Samsunspor

Sun, February 12
Denizlispor v Konyaspor
Diyarbakirspor v Besiktas
Erciyesspor v Ankaragucu
Galatasaray v Gaziantepspor
Genclerbirligi v Kayserispor
Rizespor v Ankaraspor
Samsunspor v Fenerbahce
Trabzonspor v Malatyaspor
Manisaspor v Sivasspor

Sun, February 19
Ankaragucu v Denizlispor
Ankaraspor v Fenerbahce
Besiktas v Rizespor
Gaziantepspor v Trabzonspor
Kayserispor v Diyarbakirspor
Konyaspor v Genclerbirligi
Malatyaspor v Erciyesspor
Sivasspor v Galatasaray
Manisaspor v Samsunspor

Sun, February 26
Denizlispor v Malatyaspor
Diyarbakirspor v Konyaspor
Erciyesspor v Gaziantepspor
Fenerbahce v Besiktas
Galatasaray v Manisaspor
Genclerbirligi v Ankaragucu
Rizespor v Kayserispor
Samsunspor v Ankaraspor
Trabzonspor v Sivasspor

Sun, March 5
Ankaragucu v Diyarbakirspor
Besiktas v Ankaraspor
Galatasaray v Samsunspor
Gaziantepspor v Denizlispor
Kayserispor v Fenerbahce
Konyaspor v Rizespor
Malatyaspor v Genclerbirligi
Sivasspor v Erciyesspor
Manisaspor v Trabzonspor

Sun, March 12
Ankaraspor v Kayserispor
Denizlispor v Sivasspor
Diyarbakirspor v Malatyaspor
Erciyesspor v Manisaspor
Fenerbahce v Konyaspor
Genclerbirligi v Gaziantepspor
Rizespor v Ankaragucu
Samsunspor v Besiktas
Trabzonspor v Galatasaray

Sun, March 19
Ankaragucu v Fenerbahce
Galatasaray v Erciyesspor
Gaziantepspor v Diyarbakirspor
Kayserispor v Besiktas
Konyaspor v Ankaraspor
Malatyaspor v Rizespor
Sivasspor v Genclerbirligi
Trabzonspor v Samsunspor
Manisaspor v Denizlispor

Sun, March 26
Ankaraspor v Ankaragucu
Besiktas v Konyaspor
Denizlispor v Galatasaray
Diyarbakirspor v Sivasspor
Erciyesspor v Trabzonspor
Fenerbahce v Malatyaspor
Genclerbirligi v Manisaspor
Rizespor v Gaziantepspor
Samsunspor v Kayserispor

Sun, April 2
Ankaragucu v Besiktas
Erciyesspor v Samsunspor
Galatasaray v Genclerbirligi
Gaziantepspor v Fenerbahce
Konyaspor v Kayserispor
Malatyaspor v Ankaraspor
Sivasspor v Rizespor
Trabzonspor v Denizlispor
Manisaspor v Diyarbakirspor

Sun, April 9
Ankaraspor v Gaziantepspor
Besiktas v Malatyaspor
Denizlispor v Erciyesspor
Diyarbakirspor v Galatasaray
Fenerbahce v Sivasspor
Genclerbirligi v Trabzonspor
Kayserispor v Ankaragucu
Rizespor v Manisaspor
Samsunspor v Konyaspor

Sun, April 16
Ankaragucu v Konyaspor
Denizlispor v Samsunspor
Erciyesspor v Genclerbirligi
Galatasaray v Rizespor
Gaziantepspor v Besiktas
Malatyaspor v Kayserispor
Sivasspor v Ankaraspor
Trabzonspor v Diyarbakirspor
Manisaspor v Fenerbahce

Sun, April 23
Ankaraspor v Manisaspor
Besiktas v Sivasspor
Diyarbakirspor v Erciyesspor
Fenerbahce v Galatasaray
Genclerbirligi v Denizlispor
Kayserispor v Gaziantepspor
Konyaspor v Malatyaspor
Rizespor v Trabzonspor
Samsunspor v Ankaragucu

Sun, April 30
Ankaragucu v Malatyaspor
Denizlispor v Diyarbakirspor
Erciyesspor v Rizespor
Galatasaray v Ankaraspor
Gaziantepspor v Konyaspor
Samsunspor v Genclerbirligi
Sivasspor v Kayserispor
Trabzonspor v Fenerbahce
Manisaspor v Besiktas

Sun, May 7
Ankaragucu v Gaziantepspor
Ankaraspor v Trabzonspor
Besiktas v Galatasaray
Diyarbakirspor v Genclerbirligi
Fenerbahce v Erciyesspor
Kayserispor v Manisaspor
Konyaspor v Sivasspor
Malatyaspor v Samsunspor
Rizespor v Denizlispor

Sun, May 14
Denizlispor v Fenerbahce
Erciyesspor v Ankaraspor
Galatasaray v Kayserispor
Gaziantepspor v Malatyaspor
Genclerbirligi v Rizespor
Samsunspor v Diyarbakirspor
Sivasspor v Ankaragucu
Trabzonspor v Besiktas
Manisaspor v Konyaspor

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Record transfer fees

Top price...Zinedine Zidane

ZINEDINE ZIDANE'S 2001 move from Juventus to Real Madrid is still the world's record transfer. The fee was just over 13billion pesetas, which converted to £47.2million at the time.

The world record was broken every year from 1996 to 2001. In 1996 Newcastle paid Blackburn £15m for Alan Shearer, fresh from Euro 96. A year later Ronaldo moved from Barcelona to Internazionale for £19.5m, while his fellow Brazilian Denilson joined Real Betis from Sao Paulo in 1998 for £23m. The record was smashed a year later by Internazionale, who signed Christian Vieri from Lazio for £31m. In July 2000, Hernan Crespo was briefly the world's most expensive player after he moved from Parma to Lazio for £36m. But the following month, Real Madrid paid £37m to sign Luis Figo from Barcelona.

Alf Common was the first player to switch clubs for a four-figure sum when he joined Middlesbrough from Sunderland for £1,000 in 1905.

In 1961, Internazionale set a world record when they paid Barcelona £152,000 for Luis Suarez. Twelve years later, Barcelona themselves broke the record, paying Ajax £922,000 for Johan Cruyff.

Giuseppe Savoldi became the world's first million-pound player when he switched from Bologna to Napoli in 1975 for £1.2m.

Diego Maradona twice broke the world record; first in 1982 when Barcelona paid Boca Juniors £3m, then in 1984 when Napoli paid Barca £5m. The record was broken again in 1987 when Ruud Gullit moved to Milan for £6m from PSV Eindhoven. In 1990, Juventus paid Fiorentina £8m for Roberto Baggio.

Double record-breaker...Maradona

France striker Jean-Pierre Papin became the first player to move clubs for an eight-figure sum when Milan paid Marseille £10m for him in 1992. Later that summer Juventus broke the record when they paid Sampdoria £12m for Gianluca Vialli.

Gianluigi Buffon is the world's most expensive goalkeeper, having joined Juventus from Parma for £32m in 2001.

The world's most expensive defender is Rio Ferdinand, who moved to Manchester United from Leeds in 2002 for £30m, also a UK record.

Japan's Hidetoshi Nakata is the most expensive Asian player ever, following his £20m transfer from Roma to Parma in 2001. Didier Drogba is the most expensive African, joining Chelsea for £24m from Marseille in 2004.

Dearest defender...Rio Ferdinand

ALL-TIME BIGGEST TRANSFERS

£47m	Zinedine Zidane	Juventus to Real Madrid, 2001
£37m	Luis Figo	Barcelona to Real Madrid, 2000
£36m	Hernan Crespo	Parma to Lazio, 2000
£32m	Gianluigi Buffon	Parma to Juventus, 2001
£31m	Christian Vieri	Lazio to Inter, 1999
£30m	Ronaldo	Inter to Real Madrid, 2002
£30m	Rio Ferdinand	Leeds to Manchester Utd, 2002
£28m	Rui Costa	Fiorentina to Milan, 2001
£28m	Juan Veron	Lazio to Manchester Utd, 2001
£27m	Wayne Rooney	Everton to Manchester Utd, 2004
£27m	Gaizka Mendieta	Valencia to Lazio, 2001
£25m	Pavel Nedved	Lazio to Juventus, 2001

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